

THE ROGUES ISSUE



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in future physical and electronic publications within SP's published submission guidelines





Gary,
editor

Ah, rogues. What could be better than settling in for a few hours' vicarious adventure with a loveable rogue? The success of classic anti-hero archetypes in modern culture owe as much to the historical concept of the rogue as they do to contemporary ideals of petty rebelliousness and idealism. I could waffle on at length on the subject, (but as you can see, Jodie and Christine have that angle covered).

What I really want to talk about is the content. Everytime a new theme is discussed, we try and imagine what might arrive in the submissions email inbox. Sometimes, we're surprised, sometimes we're baffled, but on this occasion we were **inundated**, which was pretty cool. Sometimes a theme just captures the imagination and inspires in just the right way. Who could read Adam Langley and Neil Laurenson's stories, which are eerily complimentary, and not be amused by the wry humour? Who could read Adam Steiner's article about the Romantics and not wonder just how 'windswept' Byron really needed to be?

I was especially pleased to see so much content that was new and different. We're all very excited to see John Kitchen's play (expect a review next issue), but it's not just that, it's people who've never submitted before. HCE and SP have all along tried to encourage the lonely writer out of the dark to scowl at the daylight; well, here they come...

Poet as rogue has long been a concept which has slightly concerned me. Not in any particularly persistent or disruptive way - I still manage to go to work and get to sleep at night - but spending a chunk of my life in the company of Byron, Shelley, Wilde, Rochester and co. made me realise that a poet with a roguish nature can risk their life becoming their art and their art being read less than their biographies (unless they write extensively about dildos, thank you Rochester). Poets often stand in an uneasy relationship with convention. Their craft is one which requires all those qualities we don't expect to see in a wrong 'un - discipline, structure and precision, and rule breaking largely within certain boundaries of semantic and poetic convention. This studious good behaviour has been viewed as pretty dull for a long time, and so the poets took to convincing us all they just casually dreamed up concepts like Xanadu until the tiresome real world of routine came knocking, and that they were inspired to great things by visions and prophecies rather than hard work and a healthy respect for Milton.

I have to admit, when the theme for this issue was announced, I was excited. Everyone loves a good rogue. From Sinbad to Hans Solo, they are the most exciting characters to watch or read about. So when the submissions began to pour in, I expected to be greeted by a plethora of swashbuckling pirates, lovable lawbreakers and enigmatic rascals. The rogues I did meet, however, were nothing like this. They don't run around waving swords and blowing things up. Instead, these rogues are everyday people, suggesting that rogues are not always the stereotypes we make them out to be - a stereotype Adam Langley examines in his satirical piece. From unscrupulous septuagenarians to the shenanigans of an assortment of wrong-doers, the submissions all depict various types of rogues and engage with the theme differently, refusing to romanticise them: I mean, come on, perverted old men aren't quite as charming as dashing scoundrels. My only slight issue was that the preponderance of rogues were of the male variety. This seems to suggest that we automatically visualise males when we think of rogues. Maybe there isn't a place for female rogues in the world of fiction, but I don't believe that that is the case. But for now, we can indulge in the antics of these - mostly - male reprobates...



Jodie,
fiction editor



Adam,
deputy editor



Ben,
non-fiction editor



Alyson,
marketing

In this edition *Everyone*

W_as:

HCE Contributors:

Simon Cain-O'Grady

K Krombie

Tim Emeny

Helen Flanagan

Sarah Spilsbury

Dwane Reads

Josh Rogan

Chelsea Schuyler

Judith Cooper

Adam Steiner

Adam Langley

Neil Laurensen

Barry Tench

Cindy George

John Kitchen

Sally Jack

Jonathan Kelham

Chris Boyd

Ian Cassidy

Daniel Hammarberg

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The Tin Arts and Music Centre

21st Century Clothing

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And:

Adam Steiner

Jodie Carpenter

Alyson Hall

Ben Hayes

Christine Fears



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and the
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Lessons in Rogueishness

by K Krombie

Are you a rogue? Roguish? Are you attracted to rogues, already friendly with some? Afraid of them, perhaps? If you identify with any of the above then read on for guidance. As for my source, wherever there are rogues, there are informants.

IDENTIFYING THE ROGUE:

There are varying degrees of roguish behaviour, ranging from disobedient mischief-makers to miscreants compelled by criminal opportunity. However, no matter what the level of insubordination may be, in order to cut it as the real thing, the rogue must be perceived as affable to all including casual observers. Even their foes might acknowledge and indeed resent their opponent's crucial element of likeability.

The rogue should be able to master charisma without saying much, a nod to film noir, the Western and the epic continuity of music that no parent should ever approve of. They must appear mysterious and intense when in fact pondering little more than the persistent dirt under their fingernails.

APPROACHING THE ROGUE:

Those who are attracted to the traditional rogue may summon the courage to speak to them of their own accord, but are advised to do so in a darkened bar. Coerce them with subtle humour and a willingness to pay for their

drinks and they may confess to you their devilish sins. If their mood is playful and provocative you should delight in their delinquency and indulge them as they prop up the bar with outrageous tales or persuasive misconduct.

As for the criminal rogue, their company is desirable as a badge of dubious honour, their presence in the community provoking numerous nicknames pertaining to a ferocious temperament. Some will challenge the rogue through temptation, invitation, one-upmanship or revenge, but the rogue's reputation will have earned its associates, bonded together by the shadier parts of any given neighbourhood.

THE LOOK OF THE ROGUE:

The face of a typical rogue will eclipse the looks of smooth skinned youth. Lines soon begin to map out a character worth investing in, from the declivity of the jowl to the hooding of the eyelids. Their walk is a marvel, too, the chest puffed out, the rest of the body strolling along as if the place he or she is going to considers it an honour to receive them.

To emulate the rogue one must practise and perfect the gait of swollen pride and probable violence.

IN DEFENCE OF THE ROGUE:

Summoning the requisite

amount of unapologetic self-sufficiency, self-confidence, erudition and wavering levels of contempt distinguish the true rogue from its imitators.

An aptitude for violence is marginally less important than an excitement for it. If confronted by a threat too great for physical counterattack, the rogue can place their bets on the vulnerability card, kept close to the chest of any resourceful trickster. By contrast, the opposition may be wise to this but cannot help but be drawn in. A sad story told well, a defiance of spirit paired with puppy-dog eyes or the defence of those seemingly less able can put the threat of aggression into retreat.

THE SEX APPEAL OF THE ROGUE:

When the rogue isn't looking, one and all cannot help but study and take notes. The rogue is aware of its movie star presence, knows that he or she can turn the heads of men and women of all types who become giddy from the heady mix of intrigue, danger and feigned disregard for their appeal.

THE MYTHICAL ROGUE:

In the right light and in the right setting, the rogue may appear as something worth aspiring to, especially when presented to the willing voyeur in sonic or digital form, better still - celluloid, performing effortless bravado

and gun-toting one-liners as if born to play them. Myth, fiction, second-hand tales and mistruths undoubtedly improve rogues.

BEWARE OF THE ROGUE:

Getting to know a real life rogue

is akin to the inefficacy of meeting one's idol. A mere stumble on a retort or the hint of hesitation can screen-wipe the facade and spoil the fantasy.

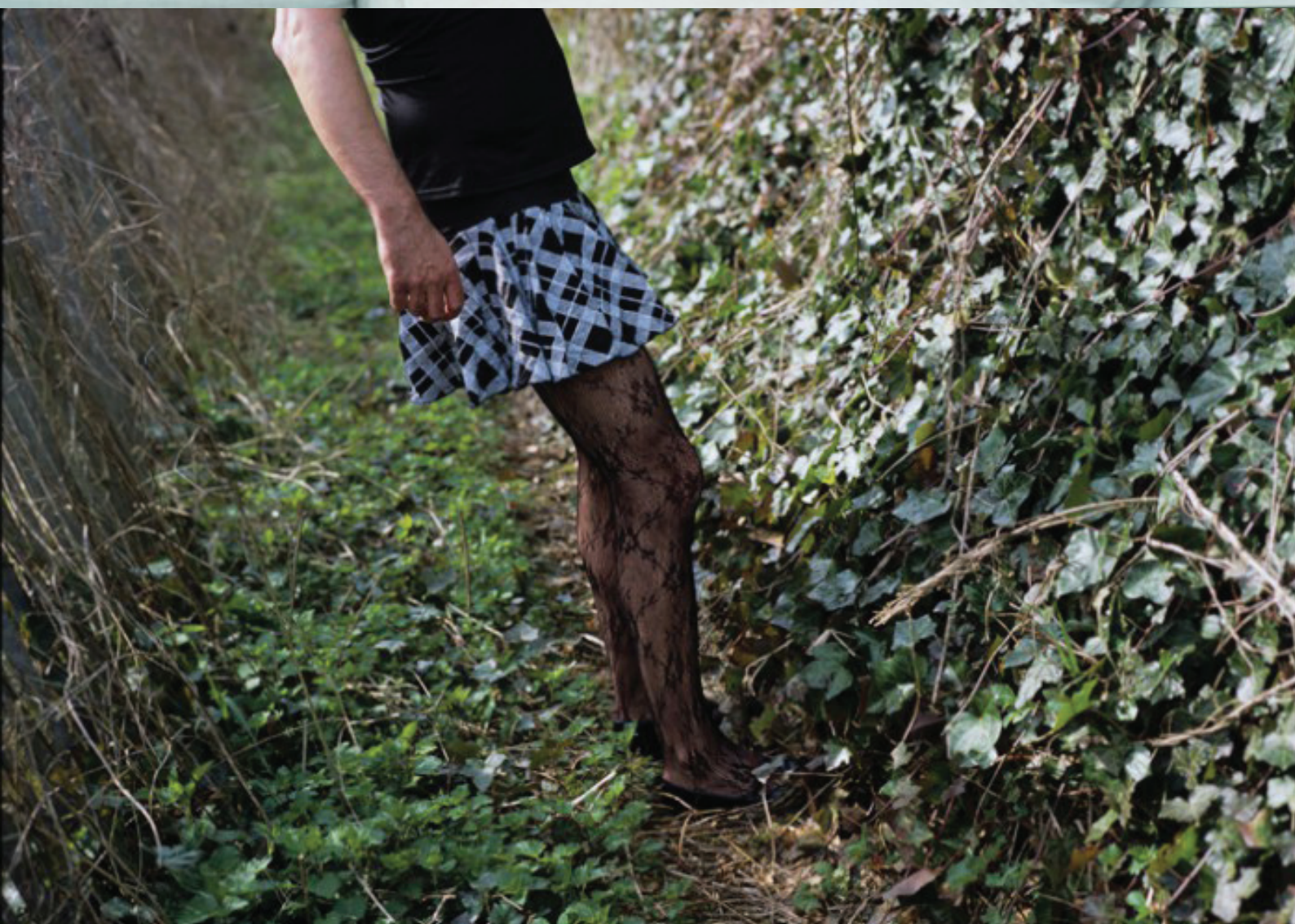
Observe the rogue, engage with it when certain that its performance is at its peak, record

its most impressive grievances and indecencies, but never truly get to know it - on no account befriend it - unless of course, you have consequently transformed into a rogue of higher ranking.



Dick Turpin

by Tim Emeny



No Strings Attached

by Helen Flanagan

Helen photographed people seeking casual sexual relationships for her project No Strings Attached. Presented here are a selection of those images.

'[One of the models] had pictures of herself from younger where she had tried to become a model. Sepia toned prints and ulterior notions of appreciation. She liked sculpture, had three children, the eldest twelve. Her lover was a doctor thirty miles away. She had a playful dog that was happy to greet me, a cat that was brilliantly white and that purred. She made me tea that was probably too sweet for my liking, but I drank enthusiastically nonetheless. Her mother looked like her sister and had only just moved in to the same house, she was watching TV in her dressing gown, her hair wet from the shower. The song Cher *Walking in Memphis* played from the laptop in her room. She was doing an art foundation course, had been living in Cornwall for the past four years, escaping her violent ex from up North and coming down for family. She told me she enjoyed ceramics and would like to pursue it in the future. She drove a rover, loved shoes and was 5'6.'

- Helen Flanagan





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Man in Birmingham, West Midlands, UK  

hi any nice lady out there

Man in LONDON, Greater London, UK 

male looking for fun

Man in coventry, West Midlands, UK    

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The Obituary of J Ximinses Griggs

by Sarah Spilsbury

I unfolded the paper and saw – why yes – quite what I had hoped for. I cackled, most gleeful, which then caused me to start upon coughing, until I calmed myself. After all, it would be no thing to do, why, cause myself a mishap to whilst devouring this!

OBITUARIES

‘J (John) Ximines Griggs: 1850-1920. JX Griggs, London, passed away on 24th November 1920. He leaves behind him his loving daughter (Louisa Griggs, noted advocate of the suffragist movement), and dog, Growler. He was born of Mary and Ezekiel Griggs in Whitechapel, in 1850.

‘From this humble entry to the world, he eventually made some form of ‘good’, yet not before a foray into burglary and larceny, upon then being temporarily rescued from this path by a Mr Isaiah Bartholomew (d. 1871). From thereon in, he was engaged within the scandal which associated itself with the aforementioned, and became the common-law husband to the woman of alleged ill repute at the heart of this disgrace, Belinda Simmonds. At this time he began a short-lived venture into patent medicines and next, spirit mediumship. After a spell of ill health, attributed by the more scurrilous, to self medication by means of OPIUM, Griggs next embarked on a career as a photographer, though it is our sorry duty to inform anyone from a respectable way of life that he supplemented his income within this field by means of taking other pictures of a less salubrious nature.

‘By way of variation within this vocation, he bought in unusual artefacts, oft claiming that these were derived from antiquity, though it is doubtful that this is aught less than a fabulous claim. In turn, this developed into turning his address of Conway Street, Fitzrovia into a viewing parlour for all manner of oddities, which eventually found a more central position in Holborn, where he exhibited Freaks of Nature of the tenuously human variety. Many of these have since been discovered to be fakes, and at best portrayed by either skilled actors or the terminally insane, leading many to question his nebulous ethics and moral grounding.

‘Ximines Griggs was also party to the establish-

ment of a whore house within his native Whitechapel, although did this through the name of his partner, Miss Belinda Simmonds. Police records indicate that he was questioned in regards to the notorious spate of murders that occurred within that sorry district in 1888, yet no conclusive evidence was able to be procured to accuse him of that charge. It was additionally suspected that he was to blame for these unhappy events less directly, by letting one of his mentally unsound charges out without due consideration for what acts they might commit.

‘Griggs’s fortunes ebbed and flowed until the public tired of the sideshow phenomena, and their cessation were completed by the premises unhappily being devoured by conflagration. He next employed his skills as the huckster to assist his daughter in her aims to gain the female suffrage, by engineering all manner of ill-conceived stunts in order to assist them in gaining publicity for their ‘cause’. His last known venture of any public notoriety was to set about organising a lecture tour headed by member of Our Brave Troops who claimed, no doubt in a state of Shell-Shock, to have witnessed the ‘Angel of Mons’.

‘He dies now, at the Biblically allotted number of years of three score and ten – a most average precedent at which he would no doubt be disappointed at, being in life keen to set himself apart from the norm, in whatever nefarious manner that might enter his mind at the given moment. His cause of death is unclear, yet it is given on good authority that during his latter years, his lifelong appetite for gin exceeded itself, and thus proved to be his downfall.

‘It is seldom that this paper makes such judgement, yet perhaps it is for the best that he has now expired from this life, for such moral wantonness is both undesirable and unwelcome in public life. W.R. WRIGHT’

I read through the thing once more: why, they made me out to be quite the disreputable fellow! In fact, this Mr Wright (I assumed it to be a chap, yet who can know these days?) appeared to hold a personal vendetta against me! Damn him (or her). Yet still, I had succeeded in my scheme: my strategy of having made a bogus call to the press, adopting the role of a

fictitious doctor, had quite panned out, albeit if the end result had not been quite what I might have hoped for.

Let me give an explanation to provide further illumination to this queer situation I now find myself in. For some time, I had had little else to occupy myself with bar my further making headway into the general decline of old age. My lifelong affliction with minor ailments took a swift upturn, and I caused Lou much grief as she attempted to balance her duties at work with those of a daughter-cum-nurse. Yet with naught on my hands bar this, I grew fretful and jaded. Then one final prank formed in my mind: to design to view my own obituary! Who lacks the vanity or curiosity to view such a feature? And thus, I had belled the press.

I poured a gin to accompany me as I looked over the piece anew (tea might usually be more fitting mid-morn, yet this was a special occasion, and my preferment required less trouble, or requirement of firing up the kettle): well, it had a start, middle, and, of course, a fatal conclusion. No flaws with regards to its construction. But of the omissions! This hack had quite overlooked the ingeniousness of my ways of operating, and also the artistry I had employed in my photographic career (it having incorporated plentiful classical themes), much less the educational aspect that my later exhibitions of unusual specimens had provided. For whilst it was that I always ensured that a fee was parted with to view them, I should have been quite free in responding to any additional queries any member of the audience might have had...

I scanned back on my life in my mind. Had I truly been so wicked and monstrous as was made out? I attempted to undertake this task in an unbiased manner, for once putting my self out of my mind. There was the possibility, I decided on reflection, that to an external stance, I might very well resemble the demon portrayed in the words within the paper. Might the writer of it even have been wise to my attempt to defraud, and wished to serve me a moral warning? In short, should I be expected to feel any sense of remorse in response to their poisonous pennings? I cast the notion around in my mind, yet not for long, as I swiftly reached the conclusion that there was precious scant I could do to rectify seventy years of sinning in whatever time was left allotted to me.

It was at this juncture that Lou returned, from the office she had started at during the war, and had seen fit to continue at. It suited her, providing a purpose to her existence other than myself. Of course, there was always her closest of 'friends', Vi, whom I preferred to displace within my memory, as she took as dim a view of me. Now Lou began chiding me, on seeing my drink, yet I protested what was the point in seeking

to conserve what health I retained – to reach old age? I was already there, and allegedly dead into the bargain! I distracted her by waving the rag under her nose, and looked on at her increasingly perturbed expression as she read on, all the while struggling to conceal my glee at the prank. 'Dad? Did you have a hand in this?'

'What a wheeze, eh? They bought it! Still a spark to shock within me yet, ha? Although I'm none too gratified as to the tone of it. They'll regret it when I reveal I'm quite alive and well.'

Lou shook her head, as if she were dealing with a naughty child, our roles having quite reversed over the last forty years. Though what she might know of offspring was doubtful, her never having birthed them, and being too old to now (such was the result of her bestowing her heart to the viperous Vi. Might this too have been another downfall on my part, exposing her too openly to my former breeches wearing female assistant, George?). She left me to dwell in my mixture of glory, discomfiture and liquor.

I could not be off re-reading it: who could? Gradually I began to look at in a fresher light, beginning to see grudging admiration within the text. Why, the reproachful tone was naught but ill-disguised jealousy! I should set it all straight on the morrow, when I planned, despite the buckling that my legs often now made, to march, in my old, proud way, into the offices and offer tangible proof that – ha! – I was quite still about! It was only when I fell into a gin-induced doze (I find I need more rest these days anyhow) that, in my dreams, I recalled other, more sinister aspects that had also been neglected in the article. Namely this: that I had been at the height of my medicinal career at the time of Isaiah's death, and had found some of the capsules I had designed by his deathbed. Had the active ingredients – taken in too great a quantity triggering death – been unfairly distributed within the batch he fatally imbibed? I twitched and sweated, much as I had in response to those most fervid of chimeras I had encountered during the height of enslavement to the Poppy. How accurate my anxieties were is uncertain, as it had never been proven that my Master had died of aught but innocent circumstances, but yet it had been source of discomfiting doubt for the best part of fifty years.

Lind, sorry, no, I have grown confused, Lou, found me awaking tearful. That she was immediately sympathetic, rather than sarcastic, reminded me of whom she truly was, plus her less ample figure (for we had all suffered privations during the war years: in some ways, I am happy that her mother never lived to see it, for had she not passed on before it, she would have surely have wished to have done under the lack of sugar and other treats). 'Dad? Are you alright?'

‘Yes, yes....’ I was irritable at her fussing, what, taking me for some invalid? For whilst I have never professed to maintain the purest of health, I have ever been quite able to shit for myself when required. ‘Leave me be a while, yet fetch me a coffee would you? I’ve a mind to step out in a while – give Growler his exercise, and me my own.’ Growler – a collie, with, as I believe is quite the nature of that breed, a character quite as excitable as my own – on command of his name, appeared on the scene and so I fussed about him on his front, and he slobbered over me in appreciation.

In an hour or so, after Lou had insisted I took some muffins and beef tea at least, for sustenance, I set out: for I knew it was only two miles or so to Fleet Street, the address of the publication that had stitched up my reputation (albeit at my own behest). Growler was to accompany me, for as he required a strolling anyhow, so as to conduct his business, why not he escort me as I did mine (and if he did it in the lobby of the paper’s HQ, what more fitting a comment?) I might even, to demonstrate that I was truly I, get him to perform some of the tricks he had done with me as an opener to the Angel of Mons lecture. And they say an old dog might not be educated with new tricks, yet strongest of all impressions within my mind, as I commenced the journey, was that I too had revealed one last ace from within the metaphorical sleeve of that most ingenious creatures of the age, J. Ximines Griggs.

And yet, as so often is my habit – as you may deduce from my chequered list of accomplishments and turns of trade – part way there, as my breath began to draw short, I changed my mind once more. My assignation could wait, surely, for the morrow. On my return, I was met with the sight of Lou once more shaking her head at me. Again she recalled so strongly the likeness of her mother as she said, ‘Didn’t make it? Hmm, well, best be sure you don’t die in your bed tonight then, eh? For that’d put an end to your designs, now wouldn’t it?’

I could not help yet smile. ‘Aw, no, Lind... er, Lou... Lou!’ For that was the name, yet even the short cut of that same auburn hair that I had known better in a more luxurious and flowing style, and the drab mannish attire she donned instead of her mother’s preference for luxury and lacing, could not dissuade me from finding her the spit of her original. ‘Nah, Lou. For be sure of it, I’m too resolved on bringing ‘em up to allow that to befall me!’

Well, I have to say this. Even in the face of apparent death, you’ve got to boost your own reputation, as far as the facts might allow (even if you need to employ some sleight of hand). And as I indeed opened this lengthier, self-penned obituary (for what else is a memoir?):

Deceit is my quiddity.
Ebullience and exaggeration my essence.
Magical mayhem my motif.
Sensation my selfhood.

So, now, yes, I am done, and up to date. My account is quite cleared, as creditors might say (though none have ever had occasion to say this to myself).

Feeling weary at this juncture, I settled for the night. I prayed (and for once in my life meant it) that I should be alive the next sunrise (and, damn, being winter, this required a longer than usual spell of anticipation).

For there is always unfinished business one has, and requirement to settle it. I began to feel drowsy, and was near falling into a slumber when Lou informed me that Growler wished to sleep aside me. I granted him this wish, yet hoped he would have none too much of his usual saliva about him.

It had been a good life, even if not in quite the sense that the vicar might approve of, for I had filled it with industry, invention and sufficient immorality to entertain myself if not others. And tomorrow I should, in one closing proclamation, a final finale, give up the truth of my existence.

I set my alarm-clock, ready.

The Sea Queen of Connacht

by Dwane Reads

From the hearts of countrymen
Countless stories of song
Undoing those deeds of scribes
That denied your existence
As unwritten history

Challenging authority
The power of men. Even life itself
Well-meaning thief's escaped of the gallows
With fearless intentions
Plundered ships of cargo in exchange for safe passage
Meet Elizabeth, but refuse to bow
At odds, Queen across the water
A chosen tongue of Latin for negotiations

A lifetime supporting the rebellions
Against the old enemies...that England
Oh Granuaile Sea Queen of Connacht
How you took to battle



Different Strokes

by Josh Rogan

For every common-garden TB terrorist
Who inspires both love and equal hate
There is a dashing plume of mild distate
With his bandit mask, a mischievous 8.
On broad shoulders rest
Bad reputation and disease
The much-hunted fencebreaker
Who too often escapes
As the vegans strike back again
Different strokes must find a way.
Otherwise, there march technicolour strides
Slid along the passing ,painted stripes
That signal another fresh,
Hot perfumed pursuit.
Some Byronic amour haunts his every advance
Desperate wriggles, unyielding
To his urgency, and busy, busy paws
Even with most pertinent claws (to resist)
His forthright charm still clings
Long after it has left.
The pussy-bound duty
Of this cavalieri servente
Somehow eludes them both
Feline confusion fogged
as femme fatale
And all without the threat.
She wears her fear
A visible sweat
That cannot counter
His errant thumping heart
And odious insidious stench.

Through Eau de Rogue
He swears snowblind
But still "Non means No"
Blurring lines
As he makes another honest mistake
Well, nobody's perfect
That's just Pepe
And his love-struck- pee-eew!



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Xena Meets Pirates of the Caribbean

by Cheleas Schuyler

Female pirate. A description so rare it's almost oxymoronic. Everybody loves a rogue, and a pirate is just a sea-rogue, so we dutifully abide. But a female pirate? Did those even exist? Indeed yes, there are accounts of female pirates all the way back to 200 BC through the 1700s; from the Mediterranean Seas to the coasts of Japan. Women who challenged not just their male pirate counterparts, but empires, kings, and religions as well. This isn't just a feminist's fantasy; their stories would spark the fascination of everyone, even

in the wake of overdone pirate tropes. Allow me a brief summary of just two of these women, as it will help to explain why I think female pirates are an untapped well of mainstream interest.

Anne Bonny was born in 1698 to an Irishman who dressed her as a boy and claimed she was a relative's child to hide his affair with the family maid. When all was found out, father and maid ran off with Anne to the New World. Unfortunately, Anne's mother would die when Anne was thirteen, perhaps sparking

her legendary fierceness at such an early age. Rumors spread of her stabbing a servant, and she beat a suitor half to death when he tried to rape her.

Her father, at his wit's end with his daughter's unruly behavior, disowned her outright when she ditched her betrothed and married small-time pirate James Bonny. No longer to inherit Anne's family fortune, James took a new job as a snitch, working for the governor to turn in his former fellows. Disenchanted, Anne began visiting the taverns where she met Captain "Calico Jack" Ratham (so named for his clothing style), and together they overtook the ship "Revenge" and began terrorizing the Bahamian seas. Anne did not hide her sex except in battle.

Meanwhile in England, Mary Read's story began not unlike Anne's. An illegitimate child, her mother dressed her as a boy to resemble her dead son, in hopes to secure money from her pitying mother-in-law. But even after her ploy was revealed, she kept dressing Mary as a boy, to earn better wages. Mary lived out most of her life this way, joining an army and working on ships.

The two women met as men one day when Anne's ship plundered Mary's. Anne took a liking to Mary and, revealing her sex, began seducing her. Mary revealed herself to be a woman also, and the two became fast friends, possibly lovers.

They sailed the seas together until their ship was attacked by the authorities. Calico Jack, seeing his crew incapacitated from



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Right: Ann Bonny, pirate and self-confessed girl

drinking, surrendered, but Anne and Mary refused, facing their pursuers without help. Mary even yelled to her hiding shipmates “If there be a man among ye, ye’ll come up and fight like the man ye are to be!” and then shot one of them through the floor. Alas, they could not hold the ship alone.

Convicted, Calico Jack was allowed to see Anne one last time before his hanging, but Anne told him “If you’d fought like a man, you need not have been hang’d like a dog.” Both Anne and Mary were found guilty as well, but escaped execution due to pregnancy. Mary died a year later in prison, but Anne was released, possibly due to her father’s influence. Her fate is unknown.

This tale has blockbuster hit written all over it. It has everything: action, revenge, questionable sexuality, betrayal, rivalries, love, and mystery. It would pass the Bechdel test with flying colors. It’s Xena: Warrior Princess meets *Pirates of the Caribbean*, an instant sell.

But these women are not fiction, they were real people who murdered, beat senseless, and stole from real people. So why would we find them so appealing?

First of all, these are ladies of legend from times long ago. Their details are difficult to verify and they come from a past we can no longer relate to. Therefore, we can accept or reject various versions to our liking and romanticize them into beautiful, driven, victims of circumstance. After all, the past was crazy, right? Their victims were probably barbarous, sexist, or elitist archetypes, so surely we can waive their moral deviance with less scrutiny. If our imagination wants a hero, it will get one.

After fictionalizing them to

some extent, the tales of lawless ladies would be loved for the same reasons bad guys often get the ratings. We are captivated by fearless rule-breakers because we ourselves have a natural resistance to rules. Doctors call it “psychological reactance,” an adverse reaction to anything that limits or threatens a personal freedom. Bonny and Read are the embodiment of this concept. They rejected society’s rules of gender roles, financial pursuits, conventions of marriage (and possibly sexuality), and demure dispositions. But they also cast off the typical rogue’s expectations as well. They proved strong-stomached, ruthless fighters with a mind for business and anything but bad luck on a ship. We, the audience, get to be rebels ourselves, rooting for bad girls when we know we’re not supposed to. It’s a reactance love triangle.

Okay, so they’re doubly rebellious, but if male pirates have been done, why would female ones be any more interesting? Well, curiosity about the logistics for one. How did a woman of those days and ages manage to become a pirate? Did they start out poor like Ching Shih or rich like Queen Teuta? Did they pretend to be men like Bonny and Read? Marry their way in like Lady Killigrew? Or were they just born hard-core like Grace O’Malley?

How a woman becomes a pirate is interesting, but why is even more so. The lifestyle choice of a male pirate is not often explored, falling usually into the “boys will be boys” cliché, but women aren’t usually the sword wielding, robbing at gunpoint type. There may be cultural reasons for this, but even evolutionarily, they simply don’t stand to gain as much from aggressive behavior as males do. This makes a woman’s motivation more

intriguing, though may exact a double standard as well. Popular culture may only accept a female pirate as a hero if they know her reasons.

Studies have shown that humans have more sympathy for another’s bad behavior if we believe that person to be exacting revenge for some great wrong. Some female pirates of the past had good reason to be outraged. Around 1500, Sayyida al-Hurra sought vengeance on Christian ships because the Spanish Inquisition turned her family into refugees. Jeanne de Clisson had it in for the French once King Philip VI had executed her beloved husband in 1343. One could argue that Bonny and Read, considering their childhoods of shamed and hidden identity, dead or missing parents, aggressive male pursuers, and extremely restricted futures, had revenge upon the world. In the end, a female pirate is just a great story. Whether embellishing their exploits in an action movie, exploring their humanity in a miniseries, or getting down to the facts in a documentary, their defiant bravery would be celebrated by the masses. Their stories are the real buried treasure in the history of piracy.

The Classic Ford

by Judith Cooper

Sparks showered off, glowing bright against the blackness. The noise was deafening and his father's angle grinder was beginning to weigh heavy. Matty stopped to rest his arms, putting the machine on top of a nearby packing case. He could just see the lights of the village pub and nearest houses. In the distance the city gave off an orange glow. Ben, huddled down into his coat, turned round to see what was happening. "What you stopped for? Get a move on."

"You try doing it."

"No thanks. I didn't want to come here anyway. Mum'll kill us if she finds out."

"Give me a minute."

Leaning back against the side of the forty foot container, Matty took a rollup from behind his ear and lit it, listening to the quiet, broken only by the occasional cough of a ewe on the other side of the hedge. Thoughts of his mum floated into his mind and he quickly pushed them away. He looked at the scratch he'd made on the side of the container. Old man Jones worked him like a dog and paid him less than the minimum wage, but it was pay back time now.

"Get a move on, will you?"

Matty pulled a face then picked up the grinder. He gave it a shake, feeling the petrol sloshing around inside. Deciding there was probably enough to finish the job he put the switch onto lock-on. Bracing himself, he pressed metal against the metal, his face dimly illuminated by the sparks, a red glow showing where he gripped the cigarette between his lips. The disc grated and screamed, but eventually a tiny gap in the wall of the container opened up.

"Yes!"

He pressed on harder. Five minutes later, muscles aching and sweat running down his back, he'd made a ten centimetre cut. To keep himself going, he began to picture himself doing handbrake turns in the car of his dreams; that beast of a beauty, the Ford Escort MkII.

So he wasn't focused when Ben suddenly touched him on the shoulder. His hand jerked, the grinder bouncing off the metal and narrowly missed cutting deep into his thigh.

"Someone's coming."

He clicked off the switch and they both

crouched down watching the headlights get closer as the vehicle bounced along the dirt track.

"Let's go," said Ben.

"Wait."

Matty was scared, but he'd never wanted anything as much as he wanted the MK II and this was the only way to get her. Next month he'd be old enough to take his test and then what amazing times they'd have. To steady himself, he let his mind slip into replay. A beautiful white streak of a car donutting in the road then neatly sliding to park at the kerbside, the car door opening and Conno stepping out, brushing ash off his black t-shirt before strolling over to where they stood by the pub door, pints of cider in one hand, roll-ups in the other.

"All right boys?" he said.

"Yeah, good. That's some wheels."

"Yeah. Classic Ford Escort Mark II 1980. Want it? Yours for £600."

Conno going inside, quickly finishing their roll ups, following him in and making an offer on the Mark II, it being accepted and Ben looking at him like he was mad because he knew he hadn't got £6 let alone £600 and feeling scared about what he'd done because you didn't rat on a deal with Conno. Then having half an idea about how he was going to get the money and being really scared but having to have that car anyway with its bucket seats, full harness seatbelts and roll bar in the back. Imagining driving down a country road on a sunny day, of taking Ben out for a spin, maybe even teaching him to drive, the half idea turning into taking whatever was inside the container in old man Jones' storage yard and flogging it, rushing back home to get his dad's angle grinder and now....

The pick-up reached the end of the track, pulled into the storage yard and parked up. Peering round the corner of the container, Matty and Ben watched the driver douse the lights and cut the engine. As Old Jones got out, he reached into the pocket of his combat jacket for a torch and began flashing it around the yard. The boys ducked back behind the container and froze. It was silent except for the occasional sheep noise and the crunch of Jones feet on the chippings.

Matty tensed, feeling the other boy's rising panic. An owl screeched nearby. He shot out a hand grabbing Ben's arm as he went to break cover.

"Wait."

Ben took a deep breath, pressing harder against the metal. The owl screeched again, further away this time.

After a few minutes, Matty worked himself up to sneak another look. Cautiously, he moved to the end of the container and peered around the corner. A light had gone on in the small shed that served as an office. Through the window he could see Jones opening a filing cabinet and taking out a bottle. He groaned.

They crouched down with their backs against the container, waiting.

"Mum'll kill me if I'm not back by ten," said Ben.

"Shut up will you."

There was a crackling noise close by. Ben turned his head to listen.

"What was that?"

Matty reached over and put the safety catch on the grinder.

"Probably this heap of shit shorting out or something. It's a load of old –". He stopped. Something was moving inside the container. They stood up and looked in the direction the noise was coming from.

"Do you think something's in there?"

"Shut up, I'm listening."

The noise got louder. Something started to bang around. Matty looked at Ben to find Ben looking at him, frowning. The noise grew, became more agitated. It sounded like things were beginning to fall. Ben pointed at the cut in the side of the container which had opened up into a thin split, through which a faint light shone.

"I think someone's inside."

They inched cautiously away until they felt the hedgerow prickling into their backs. Old Jones opened the door of the shed, listening.

"I don't like the sound of –"

"Oh my god. Shit!"

The roof of the container suddenly buckled up then burst open at one end. The doors exploded off into the yard. Bright white light beamed out. Rockets streaked off at all angles, boxes of bangers boomed through the night, fire crackers fell to earth and started a crazy dance amongst the packing cases. A sulphurous stink raced into the air. Old Jones dashed into his shed slamming the door behind him. Matty and Ben tore down the dirt track towards the village, keeping pace with the stampeding sheep on the other side of the hedge; the phosphorous backdrop and fear-filled forms

giving the impression of a demonic horde rushing out of hell.

In four minutes, as the boys were nearing the end of the dirt track, earthbound twinkling blue lights began to be seen rapidly moving through the black countryside. Amongst the soundscape of bangs, pops, whizzes and roars, the thunder of the sheep hooves was still audible. On reaching the boundary of the field, the terrified animals hurdled over the hedge out into the road. There was a deep bass crunch as a twinkling blue light took avoiding action, hit a kerb, catapulted into a parked car and died.

In five minutes, all roads in and out of the village were blocked by the blue lights. In seven minutes, three police helicopters were hovering in the lit-up night sky, powerful searchlights poking into the nooks and crannies of buildings and hedgerows.

At the end of the track, Matty and Ben were stopped bent double, gasping, hidden in shadow. After a few moments they slipped through a hole in the hedge out onto the road and quietly joined the watching villagers. The explosions were beginning to calm down, the phosphorous glow to dim. Someone began to make a half hearted attempt to round up the sheep which had begun to graze on the open plan gardens of the new executive housing development. The smell of sulphur still hung about, but was beginning to ebb.

Matty tried to roll himself a cigarette, but the trembling in his hands wouldn't let him. "Oh shit. I'm going home." Head down, he was turning to walk away when he felt a hand on his shoulder. His body tensed but then relaxed; it was only Ben.

"What?"

"Look."

Conno was kneeling down looking at the newly made U bend in the side of his MkII Escort, his hand gently stroking a crumpled door panel. Next to the Escort, parked at a crazy angle, was a police car with its front end stove in. Matty froze as he found himself gazing at the beautiful corpse of the Classic Ford Escort MkII. Shakily, he reached out to clutch Ben's arm.

"Oh man."



Here Cometh the Rogue:

Creating the Myth of the Rebellious Writer

by Adam Steiner

If Romanticism is guilty of any literary crime, it would have to be inventing the heroic poet gone rogue. In late afternoons they scribbled genius verse, and spent their evenings romancing women and bringing revolution to the common man, often with a glass of wine in hand, a bevy of maidens in tow and a subsequent string of dandy admirers, aping their fashions and modes of being.

Romanticism helped to bring about the rather modern notion of blurring an author and their characters, behaviours which they adapted from the page into their general persona, and so was born the author as hero, entranced by their own creations. This legacy of hero worship has tarnished much of the 20th century conception of Romanticism, where roguery has overtaken depth. The point is driven home by the barrel-scraping slew of half-hearted films which skip the dull graft of a writing life and skip straight to the fleshed-out legend – all the best bits topped off with an obligatory tragic ending.

Today, we know all too well that the act of writing and life of the writer are very much an open book and often placed willingly on full display. Massed-communication and recording of minor events brought about by the internet and social media, ensure that no aspect of life goes unexamined and enables author to vent, post, comment and demand apology

upon every aspect of their literary travails without ever having to leave the comfort of their desk – if duelling were still as popular as in the Romantic era, almost every man and woman of modern letters would be dead several times over.

So before the days of too much information and infinite disclosure, just how roguish, how outlandish and how idle were the Romantics, and do their imagined legends compare with their real lives?

One of the earliest writers of a romantic bent was William Blake. On the surface, Blake was anti-romantic, a hands-on printmaker and poetic rabble-rouser. As sentimental as he was riffing on tigers and street urchins, Blake's real target was what he saw as the social injustices of his day: widespread poverty and exploitation of working masses brought about the living hell of an industrial revolution that was slowly taking over England's green and pleasant lands, needless to say he was ahead of his time.

So far, so rebellious – but what makes Blake roguish was his refusal to accept a common conceit that the rise of industry was an acceptable pay-off for wider society to enjoy a certain standard of luxury living. This attitude marked out Blake as heretical to the popular mores of his time and this active resistance to the banal bourgeois was his great inheritance to the “pure” Romantics

that followed in his wake, especially the lake poets who took the sublime value of nature to its limits.

If Blake threw down a poetic challenge to the wider British culture of commerce and exploitation, closely allied to a profound belief in the goodness of a Christian god, the new generation of Romantics kept these revolutionary ideals but eschewed the religion. And this is where the new Romantics went further rogue employing atheism and a vicious satirical edge that brought them to an ironic precipice of self-parody.

While Keats had buried his head (and heart) in Hampstead Heath, luring nightingales, taming Endymion and romancing Fanny Braun, his eager peers were directly challenging societal norms. In particular, his assumed nemesis, Lord Byron (mad, bad and dangerous to know) was blazing a brief but reassuringly roguish trail, veering between both fame and infamy, and creating his legend as he went.

Byron created the errant, wandering Don Juanesque heroes that we still allude to today, and became, wrongly, symbolic of the entire Romantic movement. Byron wrote into his poems, certainly his most commercially successful works, figures of great derring-do who did whatever and whomever they wanted, the id of pure liberty, compounded with his earlier incarnation, the

brooding, lovelorn, Childe Harold, and thus a loveable rascal was born.

However, it is fair to say that Byron's most rogueish acts are found in his uncensored real life, which often eclipses the poetry in attracting scandal and curiosity all over Europe. Indeed it was Byron's vague sexuality and accompanying exploits that gave drive and rhythm to his legend and caused his close friends to burn his journals shortly after he died in order to delay the truth coming out.

In this vein, there is a common argument that Byron was at least bi-sexual, if not gay, and also happened to sleep with women.

On his grand tour across much of Europe, young Byron was known to have copulated with numerous very young boys and showed an especial fondness for them, in an area of the world where such behaviours were often tolerated but to do so in England (and get caught) would have been unthinkable. Add to this By-

ron's incestuous affair with his half-sister Augusta, we build up a rogueish image that borders on what we would now term sexual perversion or paedophilia - this reflects how changing moralities blur the lines between rogues, rebels and even heretics, their uniting strand being a Nietzschean rejection of ethical frameworks.

Byron's often wilful pursuance of women, perhaps out of genuine interest or as a kind of smokescreen, helped to mask his other affairs with a hyper-masculine love-them-and-leave-them façade which certainly overran into his poetry.

Byron's influence is great, but other Romantics added their own rogue behaviours to the composition of the heroic, misunderstood outsider. Percy Shelley was a highly transgressive atheist and keen womaniser.

He was kicked out of university for his salacious pamphlets attacking the religious dogma of the day and became a social pa-

riah after eloping to Europe with his wife-to-be Mary [of *Frankenstein* fame -Ed.].

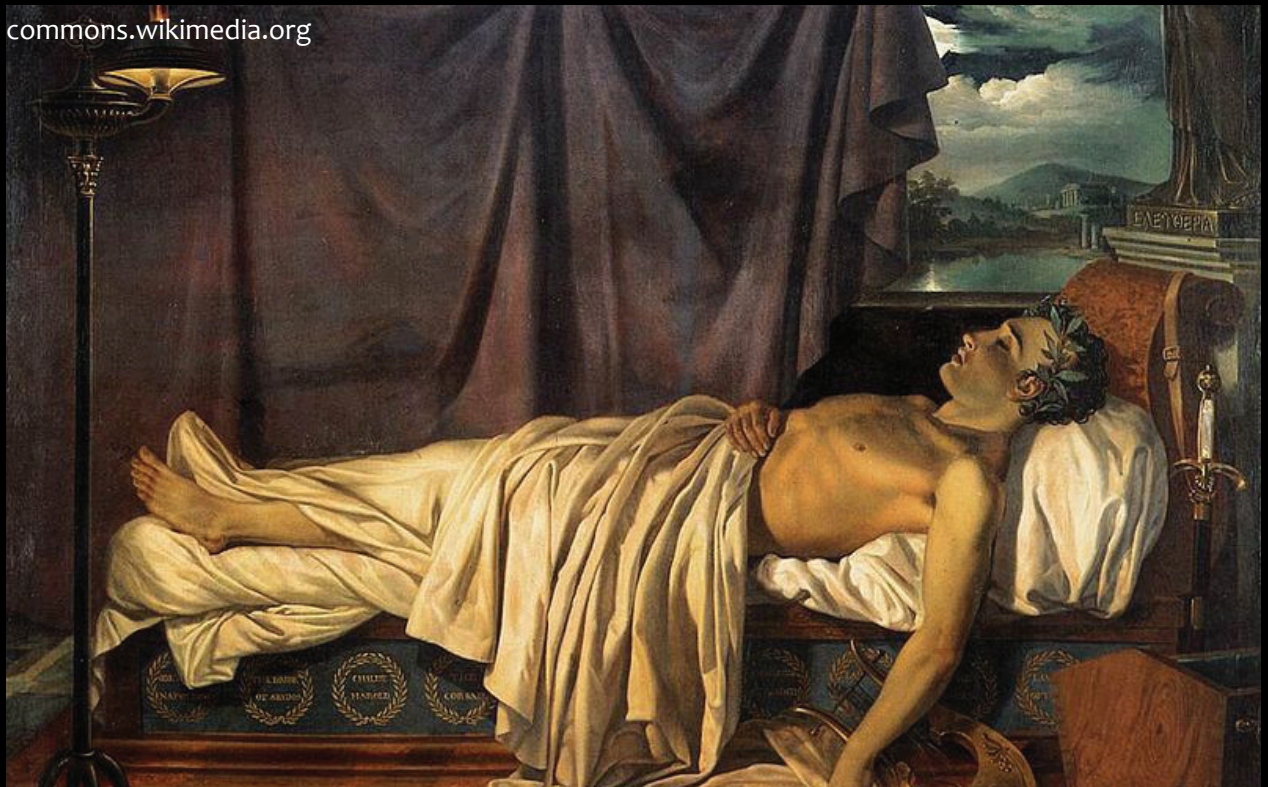
As with any extreme lifestyles lived on the fringes, the Romantics enjoyed the clichéd association of debauched behaviours, involving sex and drugs, where exile both physical distance and narcotic escape made them free and isolated against the hypocrisy of a wider culture.

Coleridge's reliance on the pain-relieving properties of laudanum (a tincture of alcohol and opium) lead to some notoriously visionary poetry and eventually long-term addiction.

While laudanum was nothing extreme in the 19th century, it was only supposed to be used as an over-counter remedy and the Romantics have long-suffered the association of druggish airs being required to fuel their flights of fancy, a lazy generalisation that has often fuelled the rogue-poet legend.

Like the dinosaurs, the Romantic

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Lord Byron on his Death Bed (Joseph Dionysius Odevaere, 1826): typically understated

poets didn't so much disappear as die out. Already Byron has exemplified and proliferated the image of the doomed and unrepentant figure who chose art over life, depending upon which day you came across him. This self-fulfilling downward spiral looms large if only because so many of the Romantics died before they were forty, through a variety of unheroic misadventures including drowning and fever, and were denied the chance to reflect upon their younger selves, they remained frozen as figures of wilful abandon lost in their decadent escapism and so paid the price for dissolute living with short careers.

This perspective was used to further gut the power behind the Romantic movement as the censorious Victorian period that flourished in the late 19th century associated excessive sexiness with dissipation of the spirit, calcifying the image of the waif only able to scribble verse and lacking rigorous staying power of the righteous, industrial Victorian, insinuating that much of the Romantic poetry came to naught but literary masturbation, tarnished by their biography, equally rogueish but also an attack on masculine principles that often underpin it. A common trade-off with the more rogueish aspect of the Romantic poets and their fictional counterparts is the vague dalliance with military uniforms, liberal struggle and high-minded revolutionary ideals, which after much talk and brilliant verse, often came to naught. Nevertheless, Byron remains an influential figure in Greek culture as a saviour who contributed to the country's united resistance against Turkish invasion,

although having died before he was able to engage the enemy, his contribution was largely financial and gladly accepted by Greek mercenaries who fought as much for pay as to save their homeland.

The Romantic legacy dealt another significant blow in its treatment of women. There were many women who wrote well behind the scenes, much like Mr and Mrs Rossetti, but in Romantic cliché, as overlapping into real-life, women were primarily an object to be yearned after and spurned when they became difficult. In keeping with his intense sensitivity, and misogynistic streak, Byron had many great confidantes who were elder women but those he could not bed he eventually quarrelled with, reducing the dynamic to another binary power struggle. Otherwise women in the Romantic period remain bit players who are either insightful enticing objet d'art, or dull shrews kept to entrap men into marriage. George Eliot, who arrived at the tail-end of Romanticism but expanded upon their sense of social consciousness was fiercely independent but even with her talents remained bound by mild scandal and the moral strictures of the period and as with Mary Shelley, her reputation was largely decided upon the basis of her association with the men in her life.

Perhaps the most significant rogueish fallout of the post-Romantic era was Arthur Rimbaud, with his very deliberate derangement of the senses brought about by absinthe and hashish, he typified the rogueish behaviour that soon became expected of him. And when he

flocked again towards Paris during the days of the Commune, it was as a juvenile delinquent, not a revolutionary. But then he was merely a teenager, who wrote insightful and crafted poetry, notable for his outlandish bad behaviour. Rimbaud was every part the rogue and it is hard not to imagine that growing up images of Byron and Childe Harold on the road again would not have crossed his mind and led him to repeatedly desert his rural hometown of Charleville, pursuing sex, adventure and narcotic escape.

Rimbaud perhaps crystallises the last of the literary rogues. Where wild youth and high spirits, the clichéd sowing off oats etc. pales with maturity of expression and realistic insight or remains the pestilent cancer of an increasingly amoral and indifferent character, thus in modern literature the anti-hero was born and came to exemplify the 20th century psychotic narcissist who makes their way at the expense of others. The rogue becomes a tragi-ironic poster-boy of unfeeling and ironic post-human remove, rogueish without the romance. So, were the Romantics rogues? Yes and no, but they certainly helped to create the modern-day conception of bad-boy heroics, from clichéd corsairs and warlords, to dandy highwaymen and fickle revolutionaries, the Romantics cast the mould which many have since tried, and yet failed to fill.

Loose Cannons

by Adam Langley

IPCC to investigate claims that Hard-Bitten Cops who play by their own rules are Stable, Caring family men.

Several police officers from various UK forces are to be the subject of an official investigation following several damning allegations being made regarding their personal conduct.

The officers, many of whom cannot be officially named for legal reasons, stand accused of being fairly decent, emotionally healthy men with an optimistic outlook on life. Two detectives under investigation are rumoured to have engaged in absolutely no forms of substance abuse or physical violence against suspects whatsoever, while there are also allegations of paperwork being completed at desks instead of standing rooftops in the pouring rain, gazing moodily over the city skyline with darkly atmospheric music playing in the background.

Several officers also face further charges of only wearing a trench coat when it is a bit chilly and remembering to shave every day.

Stock photograph of DI Anthony McHero earlier this year, shortly following the tension-filled conclusion of the case of The Shoreditch Prostitute Whisperer.

The Independent Police Com-



Misconduct: allegations suggest that 'Dirty' Harry may have loved wife

plaints Commission has launched this new inquiry in the wake of the highly publicized "Baa Baa Black Sheep" affair in which Detective Inspector Anthony McHero was filmed by an undercover journalist refusing to take a bribe from Lionel Lizard, a billionaire stockbroker whose brother was revealed to be a killer of children's book authors.

McHero – who has always claimed his one true love had been brutally murdered and that if he hadn't played by the book, she would still be alive – was later recorded by the same journalist taking a phone call from his wife of fifteen years, thanking her for putting a Brioche roll in his lunch and asking her to "give my love to the kids".

A Metropolitan Police Service spokesperson later confirmed McHero had been suspended from duty while the IPCC examined the footage.

Former colleagues of McHero have also spoken out, voicing their "complete shock".

One former DC and the current head of Sussex Police's Spinoff

Investigation Unit Clare Tokengirl said "As the naïve, yet strong and fiercely intelligent newcomer I was required to be part of Anthony McHero's team on several occasions. Like many of my colleagues, I saw no evidence of any wrongdoing on my superior's part.

All the evidence appeared to suggest that despite the fact he was a borderline alcoholic who should have been taken off active duty for mental health reasons years ago, he got the job done with professionalism. Which of course meant a combination of near savant-levels of deduction, rudeness to basically all his superiors, and hitting suspects with chairs.

The idea that he could have been keeping things like homemade jam and birthday cards from his daughter in his desk drawer without any of us knowing about it boggles the mind.

I applaud the IPCC's efforts to ferret out the Officers who work inside the rules and feel the need to follow a conventional moral code."

Rogue Teacher

by Neil Laurenson

Rogue teacher caught 'working' in class

A teacher has been arrested on suspicion of downloading over 300 photographs that portray the working class in a sympathetic light.

David Smith entered no plea when he appeared at Bakefield Magistrates Court. The 48 year old of Tippet Lane in Lower Shelley, who has worked as a history teacher at Greybourne High School for 23 years, faces seven charges between December 2013 and January 2014 – five of possessing prohibited images of the working class (136 level one, 58 level two, 63 level three, 40 level four, 11 level five) and two charges involving 21 images of extreme sympathy.

District Judge Alastair Cheney committed the case to the Crown Court, where Mr Smith will appear on 4th May. He was granted bail on condition he has no unsupervised contact with anyone who has the ability to think for themselves.

Relatives and friends in attendance at the initial hearing were visibly shocked. Dan Morris, a drama teacher at Greybourne High School, said, 'Dave is really popular with both staff and pupils. Last year was the 50th anniversary of the publication of EP Thompson's 'The Making of the English Working Class' and he just wanted to celebrate that. Like Thompson, he believes that ordinary people can make their own history, which is very different to making

up history, like the Education Minister does.'

Councillor Percy Banks, who had been in a separate hearing regarding allegations of fraud, said Mr Smith had systematically breached a position of very high trust in order to promote his views. 'On a daily basis, this vile, dishonest man accessed pictures and information on school property and in school time so he could brainwash children. I am glad that rogue elements in our education system are being brought to book.'

The school's headteacher, Magnus Broderick, was unavailable for comment, though his PA confirmed that both Mr Smith and Mr Morris will have their contracts terminated by the end of today.

Police have denied reports that the computers Mr Smith used will be destroyed, as doing so would risk creating the impression that they were inspired by the Luddites, who were a group of 19th-century English textile workers who protested against labour-saving machinery by smashing it up.

NOTE IMAGE REMOVED AT
POLICE REQUEST

Exclamation Marx!

by Neil Laurenson

Dear Mr and Mrs Marx

Your son
Karl
Has excelled this term.
He has achieved almost full
marks
If you will excuse the pun!

However, whilst we tolerate
His regular exclamations
About exploitation and aliena-
tion
We simply cannot abide
His carefree attitude
Towards
Punctuation.

His work is frequently spoiled
By rogue apostrophes
Though misplaced commas
Are much commoner.
I could go on
About his persistent misuse
Of semi-colons
But I won't
Labour
The point.

May I simply add
That he would certainly profit
From putting a full stop
To these errors.
I would not want him to start
thinking that
Class is a struggle...

commons.wikimedia.org



The Marxes and the Engelses: what could be less rogueish?

Such is Life

by Barry Tench

(Inspired by the writings of Ned Kelly in The Jerilderie Letter.)

I seem to recall the shadows that night
like troopers like bushes alive in the moonlight
so unbelievable big and orange that it looked
to be headed to crash to earth

and I was feeling as if I'd left my own body
as the prospect of death made my heart near
explode as willow trees brushed the water
in the black sky, so we slipped the noose

smacked the world's arse as if losing was in the stars
and they making such the shape of a horse that one day
I will ride to Victoria and back and no-one can say different

not that toad belly slack face sergeant with his jowls
popping with the Queen's lies as he raises up
his revolver and cuffs such an innocent brow so that hell
will be in easy reach for him and he ready to set me free

so then we ran dark faces burning with the occurrence
of our past present and future that was all looking to arrive
at once. so shoot us dead copper we were falling
from the day we set sail from our mother's breast

the creek is mud rotten and spewy so that it would bog
a duck, so that it would hold the feet of my brothers – then
I made my fashion of an armour of iron and rivets
so even the devil's bullets will fail to drill me

and the world and the Queen and her money fat magistrates
and death eyed jailers will know that my life was to be short
violent but always just and the moon is a witness impartial to this all.

2000



HCE Meets Simon Cain-O'Grady: a rogue artist 'who paints at night'

with Jodie Carpenter

Jodie Carpenter: Tell us about yourself, what do you aim to achieve with your artwork?

Simon Cain-O'Grady: Over the next few decades I wish to create a body of work I can be proud of. Works full of wit, humanity, spirituality and defiance, that is my aim. I have a thousand pictures to paint and so little time. I hope others will enjoy and relate to my work but that is not what drives me. I am compelled to make art regardless. I will have my say even if no one is listening. When did you start creating? I left art college in the early nineties and for various reasons did not finish another picture of note for nearly twenty years. Most of my prints, sketchbooks and photographs were lost along the way. Regardless of this I continued to think about art and plan every day. A few years ago I decided I was ready to start afresh, to commit the second half of my life to art.

JC: Do you agree with the idea that you are a renegade artist? How does this influence your artwork?

SCO: I think it is more accurate to describe my earlier work as renegade as much of it was political, made to be posted on street walls. The content of some of my work is thought-provoking, so perhaps people who disagree with my views would call me a renegade. I'm not sure I am. I simply want to

express the human condition. Art without depth bores me; decorative art can be found anywhere, made by anyone. I want my pictures to talk. I realised early on that art would be important to me. I was mesmerised by a Dali painting when I was in primary school. My teacher had brought in a large reproduction of 'Suburbs of a Paranoiac Critical Town'. I remember skipping lunch to sit alone and stare in wonder at the painting. I fell in love.

JC: Do you have a favourite piece of work/one you are most proud of?

SCO: I honestly believe my best work will be created years from now. That is what drives me to practice every day.

JC: What is the one thing you cannot work without?

SCO: Settling down and buying a home with a studio has focused my attention and liberated me.

JC: Is it fair to say that some of your work can be seen as controversial? Is there a limit to what you will explore through your artwork?

SCO: Controversy is not my aim; I don't want to offend anyone. I am a man with good morals so I will naturally limit what I paint. That does not mean I don't like to jest... A few months ago I painted a

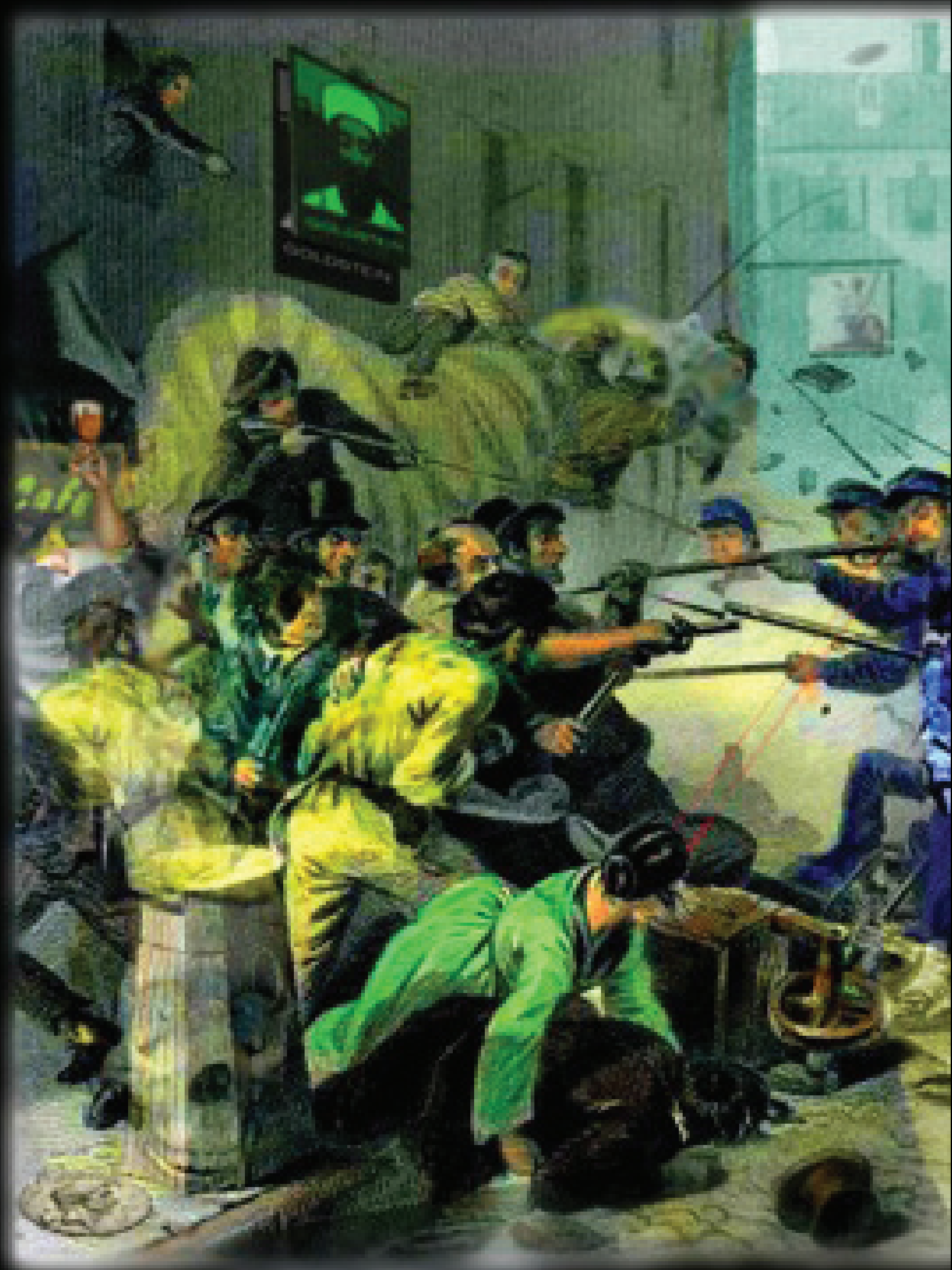
portrait of Churchill dressed as Hitler. I'm certainly no fascist and the message was anti-war, but when my wife saw the work she was horrified, she said it would destroy my career. I wiped the canvas down with thinners, slashed it and threw the canvas in the shed. Destroying that work played heavily on me: the fact that I had disowned an image because it was misunderstood. I have since recovered the painting and partly restored it; it goes without saying that I cannot sell it! It acts as a reminder to paint and be damned.

JC: You designed the back cover of our 'Idiots' issue [re-produced left -ed.]. What was the inspiration for the design?

SCO: The images you have seen are made with an immediacy like ransom notes, criminal collages. They are pure appropriation art. Originally they were printed large and posted on street walls around Italy (Ancona & Pesaro). I must say they looked fantastic on brick walls!

JC: I can imagine! Rogues are frequently romanticised. What do you think the appeal of the rogue is?

SCO: Rogues don't wait for permission, they act. They are anti-cowards.





Ballad of the Cat Bin Lady

by Cindy George

Her name was Mary Bale, she was an ordinary sort
Resigned to living quietly, whatever fortune brought
She'd always been respectable and kept her feelings in
But that all changed the day she dropped the kitten in the bin

Her dad was stuck in hospital and every day she went
To visit him, and on the way – she had the best intent –
She'd stroke the little cat that she'd encounter on the walk
An animal can reassure without the need to talk

That August had been difficult, a lot weighed on her mind
As she bent down to pet the mewling cat just to be kind
She never really managed to explain what she then did
Placed kitty in the wheelie bin and shut the plastic lid

The cat, whose name was Lola, spent a day and night in there
She mewed and mewed quite stridently, but no one rescued her
Her owners meanwhile searched for her, and thought she'd been run over
While she was in the bottom of the bin, trapped by its cover

In final desperation, they checked out CCTV
(Their car was being damaged by the thugs of Coventry)
They watch in disbelief as they saw someone pet their cat
Then pop her in the bin with all the orange peels and that

And so a happy ending came when Lola's humans lighted
Upon her whereabouts and they were happily reunited
But what of Mary Bale, the unofficial cat disposer?
They put her on the internet, and now the planet knows her.

She made the news worldwide, she's a Sensation of the Age
Her face, now famous globally, provokes determined rage
They call her cruel and heartless and they say she should be killed
The role of moral monster has apparently been filled.

To say we have compassion is admitting contradiction
If someone offers truth we ask for something nearer fiction
We watch our daily murders and put cold objection in
But save our rage for women who put kittens in a bin.

Ballad of the TIR Driver

by Judith Cooper

We left the yard at 6 a.m.
The mist hung in the air.
Bound for Ramsgate terminal
And *Fantasia* anchored there.

We rolled onto the ferry deck,
Its jaws were opened wide.
This scene repeated once again
When we reached the other side.

We drove through France all that day.
We drove through Belgium too.
Spent the night in the Netherlands
Though no-one really knew.

By 6 p.m. of the next day
We reached the German border.
No wagons cross till 10 p.m.
By Governmental order.

At last the signal turned to green.
The juggernauts nose to tail
Raced along the autobahn
Through murk and black and hail.

One day to cross the German land.
For Salzburg we were head.
Half a day in Mozart's town
Then routed Vienna instead.

Wandering Danube flashes past
Seen through a weary eye.
Travelling long and travelling hard,
Dawn streaks break night's sky.

Destination reached at last,
Park up, offload, get gone.
Only three days left to go
And time is hurrying on.

Plot the route with head that aches
To feel a soft down pillow.
Need sleep, need rest, need drivers' hours
—
Take time to fiddle the tacho.

Travelling long and travelling hard,
Drive on till you drop.
Collect return load on the way,
Take care to mind the speed cop.

Foot down hard, we're racing now
To catch our ferry crossing.
Time is money, money time,
In two hours she'll be docking.

Dunkirk town looms into sight,
Dunkirk town night lit,
Jaws of *Enterprise* open wide
And once again we've done it.

Something New

by John Kitchen

Busy, busy, busy – my first play, of any length, due to be performed the first week of March. Coming up with the initial idea was fine, writing it was fine. The rewrite, second rewrite, the alterations, the tweaking, the polishing were all-consuming.

It was hard to think of writing poems with a looming deadline. Pressure off, deadline met. Free, for a time to write what I like.

What I like! What do I like? The pieces of paper soon discarded, the screen remained blank, or wearing out the delete key.

Just write, I told myself, anything, get words down. You'll soon be back in the swing.

I lied.

Maybe it's a format that's needed, a challenge. Sometime ago I'd come across a website Dirty Dozen: write a poem in 12 words plus one for the title.

Sunday

golden glow
curtains thrown open,
light fades
we'd taken too much sun

Okay, but it was a revamp of something I'd done before, didn't count.

delicate intricate
hurriedly abandoned
unappreciated
I'll take more notice
when she dresses

That's new, just needs a title.

homely comfortable plain
yet once they were removed
she was anything but

A variation on a theme, but it's a start. Several 12 liners later and I'm feeling a little more confident. I like brevity.

I had also been making a list of books I'd like. One was Lydia Davis, an American writer of very short stories, some just a couple of lines. Not flash fiction but subtle, enigmatic episodes that stay with you. There are several to be found online. Have a go, I thought. I did:

*You usually avoid the bar. A woman on her own.
They offer you drinks. They wonder if you're available.
Why him? Why accept his Gin and Tonic? The ready smile, the light touch? For the minutes you're with him you feel you are the centre of his world.
Later you stretch. Your brow furrows. He closes the door.*

[Continued right]

It's not about quality. It's enjoying the writing; the process. And it goes with the rogue theme. Okay let's do another one.

Restriction and format worked for me. So I'm looking forward to the next HCE theme. Not relying on what I've written in the past but something new.



John Kitchen: not, despite appearances, a Doctor Who baddie

Con

by John Kitchen

Who gives a shit ? Out there, my oyster,
life's too short, take it, 'cos some bugger else will.
It's thrust at you, the bright, the flash, the cool.
If you're on the Titanic, travel first class.
Why settle for less, than Gucci, Armani ?
Sign with a Mont Blanc, flash the Breitling .
Con and cheat are nasty words, Am I worse
than the asset stripper, investment banker,
CEO or MP ? Me ? I provide a service,
a lesson to the gullible, a fool and his money,
don't condemn my success, it's capitalism,
the product of our greed. And the ladies love
the Ferrari, the penthouse, a night at Roulette,
The Ivy, Lady's Day, so, who's using who ?

West 125th Street

After Edward Burra
by John Kitchen

You, zoot suit, cruel suit, knife tie
anabolic torso, bulked out shoulders
sharp lines and shady deals
substances of the illegal kind
finger clicking
to silent jazz, posing with cheroot ;
on your arm your fox fur lady
Cleopatra eyes maroon lips
fellatio with a Du Maurier, feel
the switchblade
perfect the look the attitude
tip the trilby, lounge cool, barfly
get what you expect respect

Theatre of War: Seeking new Plays

by Sally Jack, Off the Fence theatre company

What was the last play you saw at the theatre? Chances are it was a revival of a past classic - which is a good thing - but where do new plays come from?

This is one of Leicester-based theatre company Off the Fence's core beliefs: without new writing, theatre will stagnate. Off the Fence creates and tours engaging contemporary theatre with a focus on new writing, and are also resident theatre company at Upstairs at the Western, Leicester's first pub theatre. They programme brave, inspiring and engaging theatre which can be enjoyed from the comfort of popular Leicester local, The Western.

Since their first production in December 2011 Off the Fence has produced twenty nine plays in a variety of spaces. These include Hitchcock re-presented, a sequence of eleven new, short plays performed at Curve, Leicester in September and October 2013 as part of Curve's Hitchcock season. These productions also featured specially written work by professional playwrights such as Judy Upton as well as opportunities for new voices.

And this was when Off the Fence first produced one of John Kitchen's plays. John, a regular Here Comes Everyone contributor, wrote *You're Not Leaving Your Friend, Are You?*, inspired by Mavis Brockett, a character with only two lines to say in Hitchcock's 1934 British version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Readers

will already be familiar with John's poetry so how did he become involved with theatre?

"It began with being accepted onto Curve's New Writers project and a series of workshops with Michael Pinchbeck. My poems have always had a strong narrative element. It's all about entertaining and telling stories. I go to Curve regularly. I enjoy Hitchcock films and I think Off the Fence's contribution to theatre in Leicester is tremendous. To be involved with all three is great."

In August 2013, Off the Fence put out a call for scripts as they wanted to develop a new play to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. Such events will, understandably, be a regular feature throughout the arts over the next four years, a reminder of the industrial-scale destruction of lives and communities which began in 1914. Life was never the same again.

Selection of these plays was anonymous, and John's play *Clamber Up the Crucifix* stood out, along with *England Expects* by Tom Glover. Both plays explore aspects of this period in history from an unusual point of view and their debut performances will be Upstairs at the Western in early March.

Clamber Up the Crucifix begins at the end: mid-day, 11th November 1918. A soldier under armed guard reflects on luck, rats, a mate and a whore. To officers he was invisible, merely part of the

telegraph key he operates. But his sentence is due; footsteps approach.

England Expects is a play with songs and centres on the First World War experiences of male impersonator and music hall favourite Vesta Tilley. Vesta was an establishment but also a people's favourite and her 'drag king' act is still the subject of much debate and academic study.

Providing opportunities for writers allows new and engaging contemporary theatre to be created and shared with audiences, as well as ensuring continuation of an important art form. Who knows where the next Ayckbourn, Beckett or Caryl Churchill may be hiding?

Additional Info

Clamber Up the Crucifix is at Upstairs at the Western, 7.30pm, 3 and 5 March £8/£6

England Expects is at Upstairs at the Western, 7.30pm, 4 and 6 March £8/£6

Tickets available at www.upstairsatthewestern.com or at the bar, The Western, 70 Western Road, Leicester LE3 0GA

Off the Fence Theatre Company is supported by Arts Council England to create and tour two plays in late 2014 and 2015, together with a mentoring programme with Out of Joint.



Images by Sean Goldthorpe • Designed by Jane Massey

Off the
Fence
theatre company presents

Clamber up the Crucifix

by John Kitchen
directed by Gary Phillpott
and starring Jonny McClean

UPSTAIRS AT
THE WESTERN.

Monday 3 March & Wednesday 5 March
7.30pm Tickets £8/£6 from

www.upstairsatthewestern.com
or behind the bar at The Western 70 Western Road Leicester LE3 0GA

Off the
Fence
theatre company presents

ENGLAND EXPECTS

A play with songs
starring Becca Cooper as Vesta Tilley
by Tom Glover
directed by Gary Phillpott

UPSTAIRS AT
THE WESTERN.

Tuesday 4 March & Thursday 6 March
7.30 pm
Tickets £8/£6 from

www.upstairsatthewestern.com or behind the bar
at The Western 70 Western Road Leicester LE3 0GA



Images by Sean Goldthorpe • Designed by Jane Massey

Leaders of Men

by Jonathan Kelham

'The ongoing practice entitled The Leader of Men considers the subjectivity of utopian philosophy and the creation of alternative worlds, narratives, dialogues and spaces with a concern for a particular sense of an intentionally constructed Englishness and the mythologised portrayal around the ideas of the melancholic outsider. Through the juxtaposition and montage of specific English figures and the awkward, bumbling cartoon characters.'

jkelham.com





Jonathan Kellman

He stopped
In the name of the LAW...

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was his idea,

especially the latter part.



THE SHINE S BRITISHLY
THE HON A LWDY SUSSED



LIKE THE TINS OF
SPACE SHIP
A RESTORED



EVERYONE IS REACTIONARY



Rennovation

by Chris Boyd

I mean, I'm no Casanova but I know how to make a lady hum. Never had no complaints. Never asked.

My days are made up of painting. Inside and out. Nights, I'm usually drinking or doing some bird. Not much to do apart from that.

I go into their homes. I paint. If they like me, I make more cash. Their fellas never know. I say 'painting'. I don't mean like an 'artist' or something.

I'm talking walls and skirting boards. Man and boy. All that bullshit.

So one day I get to thinking. All these housewives. They all need one thing. I mean really want one thing. Two if you count the shade of green in the bathroom. Maybe I can provide that one thing for them. Like another service, y'know?

Works most of the time. They usually pick up on a raised eyebrow or a touch of the arm. Not like blokes who need a battering over the head before things get through their thick heads.

Straight in and out. No messing. They don't take long to go off usually. It's all the same in the end. Whatever they look like. Whatever they do for a living. Tights end up around their ankles and giro money clutched in their hands.

I'm good at it as well. Got a bit of a name for myself. That's how it works. I'm not laying out an ad for it in the Yellow Pages, am I?

Attercliffe is a big place, but it's not that big. Lucky for me, I don't live around here.

Sure, I've had a few scrapes in my time. No doubt about it. Hiding in closets, jumping over fences. The whole thing. What do I care though with a couple of hundred wadded in my back pocket. Good for keeping the sharks at bay and the wolf from the door.

Sometimes they have their young 'uns in the room with them. Sometimes there's the TV on in the background. Doesn't bother me.

Wasn't until I got a phone call from the docs that things had to stop. Routine checkup. Like to stay trim. These women don't really care but I do.

I'm careful, but most of these girls, they're either got some contraption stuck up them or in their forties so no need to bag up, right?

Most of them don't like that anyway. They want you to lose it inside them. Gets them off.

Didn't even cross my mind that one, if not all of them, would be doubling up. Plumber, electrician, painter

and decorator. Some of them get through all the trades in a day.

Half the time there's never any work being done. Aside from what's going on between the lumpy mattress and the floral duvet cover.

"Can't do tomorrow," says Shirley "Got Dave down for a late afternoon."

That's how I figured it out. You got to batter blokes over the head sometimes.

There's usually a nod and a wink as I pass these guys on the way to or from a front door.

If they get around as much as I do there's no telling what they've picked up though.

I've got no idea. There's no union. We're not all sat round smoking and playing poker and laughing at these dumb asses and counting the money.

Thing is, whispered chatter spreads faster than the clap in this part of town.

I mean, what am I suppose to do right? Slip them all magic pills from the shipment I somehow manage to take possession of or the drugstore I break into?

Not my problem to fix. I fix the walls and I look out for myself. Other folk should do the same.

A cul-de-sac full of angry women and an army of diseased cocks are the last thing I need.

So things have to stop. I get myself clean and go back to painting the walls and turning down the offers on the side. Works dries up in the end like the grateful bags I'm used to prying my way into, so I move away.

Get myself a nice little van in a park on the outskirts. Away from all that bullshit.

Get a haircut. Scrub up a bit. No one pays me much attention.

Some time later I pass through Attercliffe again and pick up the local paper.

There's Shirley, Carol, Janice, Josie, Margaret and one whose name I can't remember. Looking back from the page with folded arms and these sad eyes. The headline above them spits fire: 'Town's fertility nightmare – Barren plague linked to sex bug.'

Lucky for me, I don't live around here.

Find the Lady

by Ian Cassidy

The grocer's shop where my grandfather committed most of his later crimes was pulled down shortly after he died, but he would not have been sorry to see it go. Shop-keeping was not his first choice of career; it was foisted upon him by the Jockey Club following his warning off in the spring of 1955.

He was an unlikely heir to Mister Polly and like Wells' wayward hero he was never truly at home in the uptight, upright world of suburban commerce.

He had started his working life by running away from rural Ireland to join the British Army. His service had been cut short by a disagreement with the authorities that led to a lengthy spell in the glasshouse, where an encounter with T.E. Lawrence which culminated in a one sided exchange of homophobic insults, merely hastened his already inevitable dishonourable discharge.

Next, he tried his hand on the racetrack as a bookmaker and he was moderately successful for many years until his peccadilloes caught up with him. Before they did, the Second World War intervened, but wartime restrictions on gambling did not rob him of his livelihood. The sharp eyed reader will have spotted that, as he served with Lawrence in Iraq when the Kurds were getting their first taste of British gas, he was too old to be called up in 1939. DORA or no DORA, he carried on regardless, making his one-sided books, taking bets and flimping his punters.

Victory in Europe and the resumption of a full horseracing calendar saw him resume his sporting career and the many and varied nefarious practices that accompanied it. The violations of Tattersall's rules he committed are too numerous to list here, but the more serious included issuing betting tickets bearing the name of a non-existent bookie, staging rigged games of 'find the lady' behind his stool and finally, welshing following the Christmas meeting at Chepstow in 1954.

Thus my grandfather was warned off every one of the then sixty-four racecourses of England, Wales and Scotland and found himself once more in search of employment.

To begin with, he found sporadic work as a lorry driver relying on an unearned heavy

goods licence issued by the military authorities in Iraq in the twenties and never put to use in the meantime. His lack of skill, knowledge and experience behind the wheel quickly came to light, and so he began to explore the opportunities on offer to the self-employed.

In that way he chanced upon and purchased a down-at-heel grocer's store in Caldmore, a shabby suburb on the outskirts of Walsall in the West Midlands. The shop stood quite prominently at the top of a respectable but quietly declining high street. It was a grubby off-white double fronted concern with small cold windows and a narrow, unwelcoming front door.

Inside it was divided into two sections: to the right, fruit and vegetables and to the left, everything else, which included a jumble of brightly coloured cardboard boxes containing anything from cereals to washing powders and miscellaneous tinned goods, mostly dusty and dented and all stacked busily on tall wooden shelving, the higher tiers of which were beyond the reach of grandfather or his customers. There was also a section selling cigarettes. Grandfather never acquired a taste for smoking — he thought it absurd to burn your hard earned cash — but he was happy to do a lucrative trade in tobacco products. He was also happy to sell beer and spirits openly and without a licence, but booze was something he had a taste for and he was always happy to share a bottle of brown ale and a story with his late evening customers. Providing the customer paid for both bottles grandfather would be happy to drink with him and regale him with one or more of his many exaggerated stories about Lawrence's private life, betting coups at Aintree or punch-ups in Ireland. In this way he collected about him a coterie of rather unpleasant men, a select sleazy junta who laughed at his stories and leered at his dirty jokes. Other customers were however, somewhat thin on the ground.

With a view to attracting more business, grandfather made plans to improve and extend his faltering empire, but he never got around to putting them into practice because thanks to a stroke of luck, the like of which would have been welcome years earlier on the race track, his customer base more than doubled over night.

Like other down-at-heel suburbs all over the country, Caldmore became home to an influx of West Indian migrant workers, quickly followed by a similar tranche from the sub-continent.

Many of his fellow traders immediately placed signs in their windows saying 'No Blacks' but grandfather didn't partly because the previous incarnation of that sign, the one that said 'NO Irish' had been aimed at him. But his colour blindness was not based on sympathy for fellow immigrants; it had far more mercenary foundations, money was money and no matter where a man was born my grandfather was ever ready to relieve him of it. He'd used every trick in the book to relieve punters of their money on the track, even including an audacious theft from the Tote betting shop at Sandown Park on one memorable occasion, and so he ran his shop on similar lines. Soon he was stocking mangoes, yams, sweet potatoes and plantain for his customers of Caribbean origin and okra and spices for the ever growing numbers of unlucky Asian buyers who were compelled to frequent his shaky emporium.

To accompany his new lines and to make trade progress more smoothly, he developed his own peculiar patois, a unique West Midlands variety of Pidgin English that was sometimes amusing, often insensitive, always ill-informed and occasionally offensive. He even went as far as to clumsily ape his customer's accented English as he poured out yet another of his growing collection of nasty neologisms. The more memorable of the insulting inventions and mistranslations in his repertoire included:

'Yes, no, sugary ha?' Which he used as a question for all eventualities, as in: 'Yams ok? Yes no, sugary ha?'

'Akunta tomata', which was a catch all phrase suitable as a greeting, a compliment or a word of thanks as were 'Javon,' 'Uncas,' 'Ungowah,' and 'Mungani.'

With the growing numbers of sub-continental clients so Asian influences crept into his Pidgin. He frequently bawled: 'Jahldi, jahldi' to all and sundry. Then there were words like 'Gutung,' 'Shanktar' and 'Kowolat' which may have had their origins in the Bengali dialects spoken around Walsall at the time, but a better linguist than I would be needed to definitively uncover their true lexicological roots.

I quite like and occasionally use his phrase 'Otter Purse' which means 'to get a move on' although, yet again, which language he bastardised when creating it is beyond me.

I am less keen on his use of many other West Indian phrases, particularly the terribly rude

ones. Needless to say, he had his own versions of these gravely insulting phrases but they were still sufficiently understandable for any knowledgeable listener to be caused instant offence. He would declaim 'my rarse clarts' 'cracka front' and 'plussnort' loudly and without embarrassment and also without the slightest inkling that what he was saying could lead to a blood feud.

In this and other ways, he set about corrupting the honest trade of grocer; Napoleon would have shelved his invasion plans had he been confronted by this particular shopkeeper. He introduced short changing, stolen goods, unpaid suppliers, overdue tax, ignored invoices, embryonic long firm scams and of course illegal betting to this previously peaceful suburban high street.

But most damaging of all, he introduced sex to the asexual world of provincial domestic commerce. With the opening of that grubby little shop, sexual intercourse began in Walsall in 1955, pre-empting Larkin by almost a decade.

He brought sex to the single shopper and to quite a few married ones as well. He introduced self-service, but he was no Jack Cohen, no forward thinker, no innovator in shopping method. For one thing he had an aversion to getting his hands dirty serving grubby spuds and grimy yams. He was proud of his 'lilywhite' hands, unsullied by honest toil and he had a typically nasty reply for anyone foolish enough to comment on his totally un-grocer-like approach to manual hygiene: "lilywhite bollocks."

But his main motive for inviting customers behind the counter to help themselves to spuds and carrots was to keep his hands free. His lilywhite hands were kept free to go a-roving, because once an unsuspecting shopper was behind the counter, he'd got her, she was in the spider's web, trapped inside his lair. Scores of prim West Indian women in gloves and stockings even on a trip to the corner shop were surprised by his malevolent advances as they scooped root veg into brown paper bags. With hands occupied they were unable to defend themselves as he pushed past them and pushed into them, pressing and stroking as he oh so innocently went about the business of shop-keeping.

Brightly dressed, immaculately be-gloved Caribbean women felt the bulge beneath his dun coloured apron press against their buttocks as they rummaged through the sweet potatoes.

Prim sari'd sub-continental ladies were groped as they delved disappointedly through his greasy offerings of substandard okra and wilting coriander.

He frequently hung free beneath his dun col-



oured shop coat and more ominously he was often erect also behind the starched brown fabric. Over the years, sometimes willingly but mostly not, his customers were made all too aware of it.

There was a little give and take in all this and small adjustments would be made to their bills even though a discount was probably unnecessary to ensure their silence. Their complicity in all this was ensured by a poor command of English and the almost complete certainty of the back-hander they would receive from their frustrated, steeped-in-nineteenth-century-colonial-values hus-

bands if they ever heard about the goings on at the corner shop.

Other discounts were available, super savers if you will, particularly popular at Christmas and Diwali but these required more active participation from the women. Often their husbands would be short of work, always that work was badly paid and families were always growing. Then there was the money to send home and quite often a bad run on the horses or the greyhounds. All in all the housekeeping was forever short. Arrangements needed to be made.

The immaculate white gloves would unwillingly reach inside the dun coloured shop coat - was I alone in finding Ronnie Barker's performance in 'Open All Hours' slightly sinister? - and grasp grandfather's ever ready member.

Then if grandfather just happened to be the bookmaker who held the husband's marker, and he nearly always was, more serious arrangements would have to be made. He would place his lily-white hand on her headscarf or deftly ease aside her pillbox hat and push inexorably downwards. Forced to her knees on the rough wooden boards, grandfather had scant regard for stockings or delicate sari fabric, the shopper was forced to work off the debt. Here his Pidgin English let him down, 'Jahldi' was no use and unfortunately he never learnt the Urdu or Hindi words for 'slowly' so his malevolent fun was brief because I'm sure his unfortunate victims went about it as quickly as they could: I know I would.

Not all were unwilling participants in his vice; others took an active and consensual role. One woman in particular became Gertrude to his Claudius, a true partner in vice, an 'Imperial Join-tress' if ever there was one. She cavorted with him behind the counter and drank and smoked for free, helping herself to his stocks of fags and beer as reward for allowing herself to be groped. He was liberal with the bottles of beer because she had a highly questionable talent involving brown ale that fascinated him and many other men in

the street. She opened them completely without hands, making use instead of a far more intimate part of her anatomy. The very thought of it makes me cringe, the cold, smoky brown glass neck with its sharp, frilly crown of unforgiving brass coloured metal and the frayed red label. First came the insertion and then a pause so that perhaps the Mann's label could get a little damp, then a twist and out again. Grandfather always had a front row seat when she put on a show. At first these shows were just for him, but soon they came to a mutual agreement and others would be invited to watch - at a price naturally - and then of course, grandfather sold the unusually opened bottles at a premium.

At the end of all that I'd like to be able to say that he got his comeuppance but sadly I cannot, he died with his boots off, unpunished and unrepentant, his attitude that a woman should be kept 'well fed, well fucked and poorly shod' unshaken to the end.

The only consolation is that I never really knew him: he died while I was still in infant school, but as I'm the wrong sex it would never have happened even if I had I been older. He would have had no use for me, he may have been okay with my brother, took him for a pint perhaps and probably got him to buy it.

Well at least I have a use for him - he's the inspiration behind a poem.

In Walsall sex began
In nineteen fifty five,
(Which was before I was alive)-
Between the time of Winston's fall
And Godot's first missed curtain call.

Before it arrived these things were set
With arrangements quiet and staid,
Mutual agreements peacefully made,
Then came black eyes and leisurely regret
Behind curtains of thick brocade.

Then his vices smashed into light,
Sexual intercourse was for sale,
Nothing was beyond the pale,
Things were no longer lilywhite
And you could buy a very special bottle of brown ale?

So in Walsall life was never better than
In nineteen fifty five
(Though it was before I was alive)-
Between the time of Winston's fall
And Godot's first missed curtain call.

The Heist

by Daniel Hammarberg

The following story is an excerpt from a full-length satirical novel called *An Alabama Story*. In this scene the Hix family, living in a trailer park in Birmingham, has spent the past night in a meth debauch as they are woken up by the landlord and realize they need to fix some money for their overdue rent. They quickly decide to break in to get the money they need.

Billy Bob: proud, white Southerner in his mid-thirties and father of three

Betty Sue: Billy Bob's wife, who met him while still a teenager and who's been married to him since

Big Ray: The family's 17-year-old son and all-around bad ass who takes no shit from anyone

Bambi: Only fourteen years of age, yet has already come out as a

lesbian; defiant toward her parents and can't wait to move out

Tommy Lee: The youngest child and a full-fledged tech whiz

Billy Bob is in the driveway loading the gear they'll need into his 1976 Dodge Colt wagon. He's never bothered becoming an expert burglar, but at least he's gotten himself a set of lock picks, a crowbar – and if this should prove not enough – a big ol' sledgehammer. The sun has set by now, and earlier today he was over at a neighbor's house and borrowed that man's utility trailer over the night. Probably might look a bit suspicious having the five of us exit my Dodge with that thing in tow... But hey, we wouldn't be able to fit very much inside the car, he thinks to himself. Well, time to see if the others are ready.

By now, his wife and children are standing in the kitchen dressed all in black, donning gloves and black knit hats as well.

"Hey, Bambi. You should wear that hat more often so I don't have to see your ragged hair," Big Ray says.

"You should get a black boyfriend so he could make you his bitch," Bambi responds.

Betty Sue notices the argument. "And you guys are at it again. We need to focus on this," she says. Then she turns to Bambi. "There will be no race-mixing in this house, don't even suggest anything of that nature!" she tells her daughter. "You've got a point. I mean, Big Ray couldn't get a guy no matter how hard he tried, even less a girlfriend."

As Big Ray grumbles at the remark, his dad steps inside.

"Have you guys got everything set?" Billy Bob asks.

"We're as ready as can be," Betty Sue says.

"Ok, come out and have a seat then, the car is already loaded."

The Hix family enter his Dodge, and then they're out on the highway.

"You said it was some distance past Pinson?"

Billy Bob asks Big Ray.

"Yeah, dad, like two or three miles east of the city center."

As they pass central Pinson, there are hardly any minorities at all in sight.

"A bit of a shame to burglarize this part of town when it's predominantly white. But I guess there's not much point going down to Birmingham City: those niggers waste all of their money on crack," Billy Bob says.

"No way I'm going inside a possible crack house," Big Ray tells him.

"I've taught you well. A shame we'll be helping ourselves to a white man's property. Can always hope they're some fucking liberals."

"Indeed."

Big Ray looks out the window and remembers the area he had scouted.

"Hey dad, turn right here and drive up the hill."

As they reach the top of the hill, they're greeted by a majestic white house.

Bambi had spent the car ride lost in her own thoughts, but she's suddenly excited now at the sight of the mini mansion. "I wish we could live here rather than in that dumb trailer," she says. They all exit the car.

"Take a moment to enjoy the scenery if you like, I'll figure out how to get inside," Billy Bob says.

The family walk out in different directions and

enjoy the spectacular view from the hill.

"Wow, you can see all the way to the downtown skyscrapers from here. That must be almost 20 miles,"

Tommy Lee says in awe.

Betty Sue walks over to him. "The tallest of them is the Wells Fargo Tower; it's almost 500 feet high."

"That's so unlike from where we grew up," Tommy Lee says.

"Did you know Birmingham had a skyscraper more than 300 feet high as early as 1913? The City Federal Building was the tallest structure of most of the south when it was built."

"Almost a century ago... Neat."

Their conversation comes to a halt as they hear a loud squeak coming from the door. All four of them walk over and see Billy Bob having pried open the door with his crowbar.

"Well, it's not pretty, but at least I didn't have to resort to the sledgehammer," Billy Bob says.

He walks over to the car and puts back the burglary tools. Who needs finesse when you can just use brute force? he thinks to himself.

Billy Bob walks back to his family, who are all standing next to the broken-up door.

"I guess they'll realize someone has been here, but we should be fine. Time to go shopping, we've got a whole trailer to fill!" he tells the company, and they walk inside.

Inside the house, they're completely dazzled by its splendor. In the lobby, there are expensive rugs, tapestries and even a chandelier hanging from the roof.

"This is so the life I deserve," Bambi yells out. She immediately walks over to what appears to be a dressing room adjacent to the lobby. It has assorted closets and mirrors, and Bambi suddenly finds herself in heaven. It's divided into a male and a female section, but her interest doesn't remain with the female one for very long. In the male section, she spots a number of suits and decides she's going to find out how she looks in one of them. A particular 3-piece suit catches her eye, so she undresses and puts it on, then tucks in a tie beneath it as a finishing touch. There's no girl in the world that wouldn't fall for me now, she thinks to herself as she gazes at the mirror. I bet even that dumb family of mine will be moved, let's see what they'll say.

Bambi walks back into the lobby and finds the rest of the family going through cabinets looking for valuables. Big Ray is the first one to notice her. "What's that thing

coming out of the dressing room?" he asks in a mocking tone.

Tommy Lee adds in, "I think it's our freak sister Bambi who's put on a men's suit."

Bambi tries to hide her tears as she responds. "I'm so looking forward to the day I'm out of this redneck family."

Betty Sue had found a nice gold brooch that she puts back momentarily as she turns around to look at Bambi. "Oh, you silly thing. That suit is much too big for you and it's not something women should be wearing," she says. Bambi is almost crying at this point. "Tegan wears a suit all the time!"

"Tegan who?"

"Tegan of Tegan & Sara."

"That's one of those lesbian bands you adore?"

"Yes! They're absolutely wonderful! Tegan is my personal idol!"

Betty Sue sighs. "I don't get how you got this way. We've always treated you right and we've given you a sound traditional upbringing."

"You're still living in the 19th century; I'm a 21st-century girl."

"So are you gonna help us out with this or are you gonna keep fooling around?"

"I don't wanna hang around with you guys, I'm going back to the dressing room."

As Tommy Lee is going through a desk drawer, he spots a number of distinctly colored papers underneath a photo album – a large wad of dollar bills just barely concealed.

"There's a truckload of cash here," he exclaims.

Betty Sue comes over to take a look. "Oh, paper money. I've read the financial times – what we want is gold.

Those bills are just about worthless," she says.

"So I should just get rid of them?" he asks.

"You can put them in your pocket if you like, but we're aiming for bigger fish here."

By now, Big Ray has decided he's going to explore the rest of the house. He passes through a kitchen, which doesn't catch much of his interest, but then finds himself in an entertainment room with assorted tech goodies. Covering a large portion of one of the walls is a big-screen TV.

That'd be nice, he thinks to himself. But will it really fit inside our small trailer?

Underneath the TV is a large pile of electronics. In spite of being no tech wiz, he quickly identifies a TiVo unit, a

blu-ray player and an Xbox 360 gaming console. "My brother would love that thing, I bet." He gets to work detaching the cables from the units and then sorts the three with the cables on top, making sure to pick up the remote controls on the nearby table as well. "There's four remotes and only three units. Not my problem sorting out though."

As Big Ray walks back to the lobby again, he's not alone in having made a find. Entering, Betty Sue turns toward him and they're speaking over each other for a moment, until Betty Sue tells him, "You go first."

"I got us a bit of home video gear and an Xbox for my lil' bro," he says.

"That's excellent! Tommy Lee will love that thing," she says. "You can go put those in the car, but first let me show you this diamond pendant."

He walks over to her to take a closer look. "My, that thing is huge," he says.

"It's over five carats. Must be worth like a hundred grand," she informs him.

"Wow. We really don't need much else here then."

"I feel like celebrating. Can you go see if they've got any good music here and put it on?"

"Sure, mom."

Bambi is in the dressing room taking off her suit as she feels something scratch her leg. After the pants are off, she discovers there's a sewing needle pointing inwards stuck in the fabric, and she's bleeding a little.

What the fuck? Are they completely out of their minds just leaving a needle there? she thinks to herself. After her initial reaction has settled, she starts making a plan. This so calls for a lawsuit.

Bambi takes out the pen and the little note block she has in her pocket and starts drafting a complaint. Let's see now, how do they do this stuff on TV...

"Cause of action.

1) Endangering the health and welfare of the plaintiff by leaving a lethal needle inside the pants of a men's suit, one which barely scratched the plaintiff but could have done much more than that."

She walks out into the lobby, where the floor is now littered with assorted junk thrown out from

the desks and cabinets. It takes a bit of effort not stepping on anything.

"2) Putting the plaintiff in jeopardy through having a messy lobby where said plaintiff might trip on any out of a large number of objects on the ground and thereby hurt herself."

Now she decides to take a tour of the house to see what other grounds she can find. Entering the living room, she finds it much too stuffed with furniture, with the colors badly matched. On top of it all, there's a moose head hanging on the wall.

"3) Being subjected to the hideous interior decoration of an unstylish house, causing the plaintiff to suffer mental anguish."

Big Ray is back in the entertainment room, this time inspecting the music section. In a corner, there's an audio system with racks of CDs, and he browses through them. The records aren't very much to his liking – black artists such as Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis and John Coltrane all adorn their covers. What the fuck, don't they have anything other than shitty nigger music? he whispers to himself as he throws the discs away. Maybe there's something on the radio at least. If I can remember where that country station was... think it was 104.7.

Big Ray switches over to the radio and turns it on. He immediately recognizes Tim McGraw's voice and cranks up the volume. "I'm gonna live where the green grass grows, watching my corn pop up in rows," he hums along with the music and heads back to his parents, who he assumes will be pleased. But since he finds them having a romantic moment together dancing, he decides not to disturb.

Not everyone appreciates the music, however. Bambi is severely disturbed at the tones, and her pen goes hot again.

"4) Plaintiff experiencing unbelievable torment due to noise coming out of the house speakers, noise that to some people is referred to as 'country music'."

Oh, fuck it, I'm going to have to rewrite this with more defendants than just the people living here – now there's that radio station too. Maybe I should sue the guy singing as well. She ponders the situ-

ation for a moment, and then continues writing in her note block. So how much do they owe me? That needle, hmm...that's 10 million. Then there's that mess in the lobby, that's another 10 million. The decoration is 10 million for sure. And no one in their right mind can deny me 10 million for having to listen to this country music.

"Actual damages \$40,000,000.00," she writes.

Then there's punitive damages. They're simply not getting away with this.

While completely absorbed in the lawsuit, she suddenly hears a loud bang and a scream coming from upstairs. Big Ray had wandered into a bedroom one floor up under the assumption that no one was at home, but stumbled onto an old man who

sleeps with his rifle and who shot him the moment he stepped through the door.

Everyone else has heard it too, and Billy Bob yells out, "Gunfire, high tail it out of here!"

As Billy Bob, Betty Sue, Bambi and Tommy Lee all bolt for the car, the old man comes running down the stairs. A couple of seconds later, Billy Bob hits full throttle and the four of them take off down the hill, with the gear in the car trailer clearly visible. Thankfully it's pitch black by now, and he navigates his way back home through smaller roads, avoiding passing through central Pinson. 15 minutes later, they're back at their trailer.



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UPSTAIRS AT
THE WESTERN

The Plot

by K Krombie

The man raised the boy he'd been lumbered with into a fine thief. The boy was small and lithe enough in his infancy to fit through the gaps and windows of fancy dwelled neighbourhoods in pursuit of goods and gold. One evening, back at their spot in the wood, the man counted and valued that day's stolen treasures.

"Well done, Jack. I'd put you in silk and finery if I could care enough. If I were an honourable clicker, I'd share out the booty. I ought to put you with a tutor so you can learn the written word, not like me, hand like a foot. But I couldn't care less about you. I've had nine years to feel for you as a father should. But in all that time, I've never cracked a smile out of your sullen staring head. If I as much as pat that great dark mass of hair you go to kick me amidships. Little bastard! You're useful, but not likeable. Since you arrived, this wood has changed from the wood I once knew. This wood, where your mother died bringing you into the world is more cursed than the outside world from which I fled. Since you arrived, an icy cold unnatural breeze has been following me. What do you say to that, Jack?"

The boy looked at the man, hard and deep.

"I say I'd like to kill you."

At this, the man dropped his treasures, aware of a crippling chill about his heart. He had understood for nine long years that the boy was more accustomed to the opposite of love.

That night the man watched the boy sleep soundly under the full moon, thinking this peaceful slumber a desirable way by which to remember him. Jack had frightened him like the truth to a bluffer, and so he put the tip of his blade against the tender flesh of Jack's throat, and as he pressed to cut a swift kill, the moon became blurred and a moment later, was gone.

The man's eyes were cut, the right and then left, by the boy who possessed a bigger, sharper blade. Another thrust put a stop to the elder's heart, and just then the boy's heart stopped too, but only for a moment.

As the beat returned to the boy, he considered his actions just. Nature, he reasoned at an

incapable age, could fill any gap that got in the

way of his pursuits. He had no need for parental guidance. He would become his own guide and more besides. Jack placed his palm against the poke of his ribcage and felt no rhythm, no music, no idle note to play along to.

He stole from the few folk that lived about him and was able to browbeat the weak into assisting his dirty work. Armed with new recruits who clung with fear to the coattails of his shadow, Jack terrorised the folk of the wood. Fond of kidnapping for ransom and frolic, he paired this with demanding fees for protection against his own. He cut down trees to build lowly huts, scattered and ugly, and inhabited them with one penniless mopus after another. And for their rotten dwellings, they paid him with a work too dirty to mention.

More and more came to the wood, stamping and digging, pulling, dirtying and making their deafening din. The poplars, aspens, oaks and hazels were ripped from their roots without mercy. All of Kentish London knew the footsteps of Jack. He was prone to pacing the land, stinking of stale old hock and aggrandising his now mythical scaremongering, amongst anyone whose underfed fingers were too spindly to block their ears. His men he'd left to their own of late. Just like his father, he preferred his own company.

But one particular morning, if Jack had been forced into detailing his disposition, he might say that his state was "analogous to falling from the night sky with a great thud, as if kicked from the up above, the palace of wonders, dropped upon Kentish London, bruised, bedraggled, and consumed by thirst." Giddy with barrel fever, he'd fallen over and grazed his knees against the pebbled soil. He heard laughter from a female, mocking him from a hiding place somewhere in the wood.

The taste of these parts was at best, potent, and at its worst tinctured in addiction. He hurried, panting with feverish tumult, scuffling over ditches and mounds and stopped to lick the skim from a drizzled ditch. As he did so, his reflection in the water aimed its dagger stare right back at him. The earth beneath shuddered with a rumbling. Sniffing the dust just once, he knew that it

was goods he could smell.

As Jack stumbled out from under the trees, the birds flew atop the wood canopy, great rings of

towered watching. The mammals hid, and the air and blooms retreated from a man more damned than he could ever know.

Arising on his hinds at the edge of the wood, he slowed his soles upon a courser footing, the run of a deliberate path and was at once confronted, almost wiped from his step.

A coach drew its horses high into the air.

The driver, in a great temper, swore and panicked the horses some more, then set upon the man who had blocked his path.

“Out of the way you mumchance! Run into the woods you bull calf beast or I shall whip that blaggard hide!”

The horses hoofed at the air in front, and as the troublemaker’s instinct beckoned, he showed that idiot driver how beasts should be calmed. Slotting his shape betwixt the horses, he blew a hush to both their heads. Moments later, they were shushed and lulled until his deed was done. By the driver’s throat, Jack took him, pulling him right from his seat into the wood where he was seen to.

Upon Jack’s return to the coach, the passenger, a young gentlewoman, scented with both fright and curiosity, looked wide eyed at him from the dark of her carriage, the gleam of jewels about her reminiscent of the stars in the night-time peering through the gaps of the wood.

“Avast! What have you done with the driver, you beast? Keep away from me!”

Moments later, he whispered again at those once lulled beasts and their hooves took with them what remained of their passenger. As the morning slipped into a brighter light, he wondered what to do with the gift she had bestowed upon him. What would he do with his shiny new things?

His head, heavy and bowed, sniffed at the dust, still airborne from the haste of the horses. It danced about him, sparkling in the lustre of a rising sun. In his excitement, he revisited a plot he knew well. There he got down on his front and parted the soil where his mother and father lay, to frig the earth and teach it a lesson. Getting himself up and fastened, he heard that same female laughter aimed at his antics. In response, he cursed on through the wood, leaving behind his demon seed that was making itself known amongst a fertile, vengeful and angry soil.

Up ahead, along the path, pitched in the glow

of the ascending orb, stood an inn; crooked, small, wooden and shab-ragged. This is where the laughter had led him, but now he could hear it no more.

The main door stood ajar, and a few yards ahead of it on the tip of the path, a woman stalked her own wandering eye-line, circling some, like a dog probing the traces left by another beast.

This woman he had a vague notion of, for he had known women like her.

A moment later, she turned her head and smiled enough to show her gratitude for strangers. Aware of his intimate inspection, she ruffled her hair so that a great tangled lock fell over her face.

“I won’t be serving you at this hour. I’m off back to bed.”

She spat a hard lump of sot weed at his boots, taking a moment to study their wear and tear.

“We are not open, sir.” She chuckled. “Especially not to strangers like you. Been digging in the woods, ay, Mr Beau Nasty?”

“Miss, I ask only for ale by itself, and your company as accompaniment.”

“Hmph, well you must be sober if you can say that at this early hour. You got money to pay for this ale?”

“No, but I do possess shiny new things.”

She paused, then, “I need a laugh, so come now. Follow Lizzy into her Castle Inn.”

The Castle Inn’s rot was both loutish and grandiose, tearing up the walls for a better aim. Damp all over, the Castle enclosure was snug in the strength of a hissing fire. Lizzy slammed the man’s tankard upon the bar for him to come and fetch then walked around it. Clearly, she did not want to join him by the hearth, perhaps too bright a space for him to look upon her.

Crossing the room his soles flattened the asters that forked their way from the soil through the cracks of the inn floor. Patting the stool next to hers, she fixed him with a narrow stare, drinking gin straight from the bottle.

Jack emptied his coat pocket onto the bar, at which Lizzy’s jaw dropped.

“I prefer something stronger than ale. Is this payment enough for as much liquor as my gut will entertain?”

She laughed, a familiar sound, then turned around upon her stool and lifted her tangled locks, baring the back of her neck. Taking the necklace from his shiny pieces, Jack clipped it around her. She lifted its glittering ruby jewel to her lips and kissed it, then tugged at the unfastened hanging

lace of her blouse, watching Jack as he watched her.

"What kind of criminal are you, sir?"

"I don't yet know which kind I like."

"Which crime do you take a liking to most, sir?"

"Why do you ask?"

"A liking for intrigue, no more and no less. At first sunrise upon this very morning, I see you marching out of the wood, as dirty as a dog and begging for ale. Now you may well ask, 'Should she not be afraid of a strange man keeping her company?' Well sir, whoever you may be, you are a true rogue, and for that, you deserve another drink."

The Castle Inn, built from the flesh of the wood, did upon this day radiate a warning from the fire-light glow within, not to touch.

Lizzy clicked her tongue and leaned over, taking Jack's chin in her bacon-fed fingers.

"Your name, sir?"

"Jack."

"Do you possess only one name, Jack?"

"A solitary name need not be lonely, miss. Though you may call me anything you wish."

Lizzy grabbed at the wooden ladder to the rear of the room and as she gazed up at the dark square hole in the ceiling above, a strange cloudy hue appeared about her face as if she had applied ancient rouge in the dark. Finishing the last of his ale, Jack watched her climb up the ladder and disappear.

At the four corners of the attic, lit candles grew faint.

Jack suffered at her impatient hands and the unwholesome growth of their barbed fingernails. His ears drummed from her shrieks and the bed became patched with the blood from his ripped

flesh. Many hours had passed.

"Enough of this! Enough!"

As she heaved with her hips, attempting to seize control from underneath, he turned her over and bit her behind 'til she screamed back the fillings of her rotten inn.

"Shush, Lizzy... I can hear something. Did you hear something?"

"Tell me more about your wicked ways."

"Enough, Lizzie!" Jack squeezed Lizzy's fore-

arm enough to cause sufficient discomfort. "Does it excite you? Tales of my wickedness made frenzied and delirious by the suggestion of foul play?"

"Hmph! You're the devil in flesh, missing only horns."

"One is enough. Now bring one's ass to the anchor."

As the pair made lust, the night pour bounced off a colossal thunder. Lizzy's gaze told an unavoidable truth. He himself she could not warm to, but his lovemaking had her bound.

Then thunder, like a solid beat upon his bones, a burst of percussion ringing in his ears, and bodies one by one climbing out of the hole from the ladder beneath the attic floor. Three men, one aged and bearded, followed by one young and pox-scarred and then another, Moorish, tallow-breeched and scowling. Jack's men.

"What do you want? What is this, a trap?"

"Man, do not riddle us!" threatened the Pox.

"Yes," continued the Moor. "A true rogue. Sharing little of the steal, a bad habit is that. A sham cutter! I'm no saint but I can curse your methods. There's no talking to a man who'd see your throat cut before lending you an ear. I durst dwell but it was fear and awe that had us robbing for you. Then fear and awe gave way to vengeance, the more friendly you got with your reputation."

"Gentlemen," the accused reasoned, "you are rabbit hunting with a dead ferret. Are we not servants to our own natures? Mine is wicked but playful, neither pious nor Godless, I don't deserve this! Nature welcomes us all and we owe it to ourselves to find a way to keep our heads just above the soil. Now please, make noise and bloodshed elsewhere."

Jack's men struck him with boots and fists and then pulled his naked form away from Lizzy. As they did so, she laughed harder than she had all day long. After dragging Jack's limp body to his cadaver plot, they dug a shallow hole and put him to rest on top of where his old Ma and Pa lay, now three in a row.

From there on, in that dark spot, Jack was left to nature's work.

Next time in HCE: CIRCLES

Why doesn't the 'perfect circle' exist?

Is the 'Circle of Life' comforting or soul-crushing?

What would a world without curves be like?

Do wedding rings symbolise eternity or entrapment?

**Submissions
Close:
March 15th**



